

APPENDIX J

Comments and Responses

INTRODUCTION

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) announced the availability of the Draft Resources Management Plan (RMP)/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for public review and comment in the *Federal Register* on March 25, 2005. This announcement initiated a 90-day public comment period that ended on June 23, 2005. Governmental agencies, tribes, and the public were invited to submit their comments by mail, through the project website, electronic mail (email), facsimile transmissions (faxes), and at public hearings held on May 10 and 11, 2005.

Copies of the Draft RMP/EIS, in electronic or digital format, were mailed to members of the public who had commented during the scoping period; in addition, copies were made available at the information repositories, on the project web site, and distributed upon request.

1.0 PUBLIC HEARINGS

Two hearings were conducted to provide members of the public an opportunity to comment on the Draft RMP/EIS. The hearings were held on May 10, 2005, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the BLM Las Vegas Field Office and on May 11, 2005, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Paseo Verde Library in Henderson. The total attendance for the two meeting was approximately 100 people.

The hearings were open to the public and as attendees arrived, they were asked to sign-in, and were given an opportunity to view displays, including how to submit comments, and take informational material such as copies of the Draft RMP/EIS. After introductory remarks by BLM and a slide presentation, individuals of the public were allowed 3 minutes each to voice their comments, which were recorded verbatim by a court reporter. Hard copy comments from the public were collected at the hearings. Additionally, the public was invited to submit comments by mail, fax, or email by the end of the comment period.

1.2 COMMENTS AND RESPONSES ON DRAFT RMP/EIS

BLM received about 550 comments on the Draft RMP/EIS from federal agencies; state, local, and tribal governments; public and private organizations; and individuals. These comments were presented as recorded statements at the public hearings, or in written documents submitted at those hearings or sent to BLM by regular mail, e-mail, and fax.

This appendix contains the comments BLM received on the Draft RMP/EIS, and BLM's response to those comments. For a number of topics, "summary comment responses" provide a single response to multiple comments on the same or related topics. Table J.1 (at the end of this introduction) provides references to responses for all of the comments received. This tables indicates the locations in this section where the reader can find particular comments and BLM responses.

BLM assessed and considered public comments on the Draft RMP/EIS both individually and collectively. Some comments led to RMP modifications; others resulted in a response to explain BLM policy, to refer readers to information in the Draft RMP/EIS, to answer technical questions and further explain technical issues, to correct reader misinterpretations, or to provide clarification. A number of comments provided valuable suggestions for improving the RMP/EIS. As applicable, the responses in this section identify changes that BLM made to the document as a result of the comments.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

Because a number of commenters had the same issues, BLM elected to extract and categorize comments and, as appropriate, group the same or similar comments for response. This approach enabled BLM to more efficiently consider, individually and collectively, all comments received.

The following list highlights key aspects of BLM's approach to capturing, tracking, and responding to comments on the Draft RMP/EIS:

- BLM read all comment documents (including those from transcripts) and their attachments to identify and extract comments. After comment identification, BLM grouped individual comments by categories and assigned each comment to an expert in the appropriate discipline to prepare a response.
- Frequently, more than one commenter submitted identical or similar comments. In such cases, BLM grouped the comments and prepared a single summary response for each group.
- To the extent practicable, BLM presented the comments in this section by topic. Each comment-response pair, individual or summary, consists of three parts: (1) the number of the submitted comment document and the comment number or for summary comments, the comment number, (2) the individual or summary comment, and (3) the response.
- To the extent practicable, this document presents the comments extracted from comment documents as stated by commenters. That is, with the exception of correcting obvious errors and other minor modifications, BLM has neither edited or rewritten the comments submitted. Comments grouped and summarized for response are, by necessity, paraphrased, but BLM made every effort to capture the essence of every comment included in the summary comment.
- BLM made every effort to be fully responsive to every comment it received on the Draft RMP/EIS. When the meaning of a comment is not clear, BLM made a reasonable attempt to interpret the comment and responded based on that interpretation.

1.4 ORGANIZATION OF THE COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

BLM extracted the individual comments from all the comment documents and categorized them according to the topical outline prepared for this section.

- 1.0 Abandoned Mines
- 2.0 Alternatives
- 3.0 Cultural Resources
- 4.0 Document Quality
- 5.0 Facilities
- 6.0 Fire
- 7.0 Grazing
- 8.0 Impacts
- 9.0 Lands and Realty
- 10.0 Purpose and Need
- 11.0 Recreation

- 12.0 Regulatory and Policy Issues
- 13.0 Transportation
- 14.0 Vegetation
- 15.0 Wilderness
- 16.0 Wildlife
- 17.0 Outside of Scope
- 18.0 Petroglyph Site Management
- 19.0 North McCullough Wilderness

1.5 HOW TO USE THE COMMENT-RESPONSE SECTION

Table J.1 provides alphabetical guides to the location of comments provided by organizations and individuals, respectively. To find a comment and the BLM response, locate the commenters name in the appropriate table and turn to the index locations listed. The identification number in parentheses after the index location identifies the section where the comment/response pair can be located. Although the number of the comments is not sequential, it is chronological.

As an example, Mr. Booth submitted a letter that contained 14 identified comments. If one wanted to read the BLM responses to Mr. Booth's comments, one would first find his name in Table J.1. The first column to the right of his name, indicates the document number, which is assigned as the comments were received. The last column contains the location of the responses to Mr. Booth's comments. For example, one is first directed to Section 2, summary comment response (SCR) 9; then section 2, SCR 26; and then eventually, section 4, comment response 443. Summary comments and responses are listed first in the appropriate sections.

Table J.1 Commenter Index

Commenter	Document Number	Location of Comments/Responses [Section (Comment Number)]
Adams, Paul	9	2(SCR9), 11(SCR1), 11(SCR5), 11(SCR6)
Anderson, Lester	88	11(SCR1), 11(SCR5), 18(278)
Astei, Howard LRCLV	60	2(SCR9), 11(SCR1), 11(SCR5), 11(SCR6)
Baldrice, Alice NV State Historic Preservation Office	127	2(SCR:9), 3(519), 3(520), 3(521), 3(525), 3(526), 3(527), 3(528), 3(529), 3(530), 3(531), 11(522), 11(SCR14), 11(SCR22), 18(SCR39)
Barber, Joe	102	11(SCR1)
Belcher, Jeffory	52, 92	11(SCR1), 11(SCR3), 11(SCR5)
Bennett, Christy	59	2(SCR9), 11(SCR1), 11(SCR5), 11(SCR6)
Bennett, Tom	58	2(SCR9), 11(SCR1), 11(SCR5), 11(SCR6)
Berg, Al Friends of Red Rock Canyon	39	11(SCR1)
Bien, Eric	32	11(SCR3)
Bonnett, Alberta Anthem Hiking Club	29	11(SCR1), 11(SCR4), 11(SCR7)
Booth, Howard	117	2(SCR9), 2(SCR26), 4(443), 4(444), 4(SCR27), 11(434), 11(435), 11(437), 11(440), 11(441), 11(SCR3), 11(SCR4), 11(SCR14), 13(436)
Bradley, Martin	50	11(SCR1), 13(SCR43), 16(111), 19(117)
Brennam, Brad	62	2(SCR9), 11(SCR1), 11(SCR5), 11(SCR6)
Brown, Ray	107	2(SCR9), 11(SCR1), 11(SCR5), 11(SCR6)
Campbell, Thomas	40	11(SCR3), 11(SCR4), 12(78)
Carey, Michael Sun City Anthem Hiking	15, 86, 93	4(SCR27), 11(SCR3), 11(SCR1)
Carl, Bob	61	2(SCR9), 11(SCR1), 11(SCR5), 11(SCR6)
Carr, Ellen	22	11(SCR2), 11(SCR3), 11(SCR4), 13(49)
Carr, John	21	11(SCR2), 11(SCR3), 11(SCR4), 13(45)
Chadwick, Ralph	90, 98	12(SCR11), 13(281), 13(283)
Cheema, Andy Land Rover Club Las Vegas	57	2(SCR9), 11(SCR1), 11(SCR5), 11(SCR6)
Clinard, Gary Dunes and Trails ATV	129	11(SCR:1)

Commenter	Document Number	Location of Comments/Responses [Section (Comment Number)]
Club		
Coratello, Vince	78	11(SCR1)
Corey, Joseph	105	2(SCR9), 11(SCR1), 11(SCR5)
Cox, Pamela	36	11(71), 11(SCR3), 11(SCR:4)
Dodrill, Ed Southern Nevada Regional Trails Partners	35, 111	11(68), 11(SCR1), 2(SCR9), 11(374), 11(382), 11(SCR1), 11(SCR3), 11(SCR4), 11(SCR9), 11(SCR14), 11(SCR25), 11(SCR41), 11(SCR42)
Dressman, Frank	13	11(SCR3), 11(SCR4), 11(SCR10)
Dunn, Joan Friends of Nevada Wilderness	94	11(SCR3)
Dunn, Leslie	95	11(SCR7)
Farmer, Lisa Las Vegas Valley 4 Wheelers	71	11(SCR1)
Feldman, Jane Sierra Club Southern NV Group	103	2(SCR26), 5(SCR29), 5(SCR30), 10(SCR8), 11(SCR3), 11(SCR4), 11(SCR14), 12(SCR11), 18(SCR40), 19(SCR32), 19(SCR33)
Fowler, Robert	45, 46	11(SCR4), 18(88)
Fujii, Laura EPA Environmental Review Office	125	8(514), 8(515), 8(516)
Fuller, Steve	2	11(SCR5)
Fuller, Tracy	3	11(SCR5)
Gardberg, Jerome	25	11(SCR3)
Gerber, Jared City of Henderson	124	19(512), 19(513)
Ghaimu, Beverly	38	11(SCR5)
Gomez, Blas	24, 96	11(SCR1), 11(SCR7), 11(SCR10)
Goodman, William	63	2(SCR9), 11(SCR1), 11(SCR5), 11(SCR6)
Greene II, Ellis	118	4(446), 5(491), 5(SCR30), 11(SCR10), 11(SCR25), 11(SCR42), 17(454), 18(449)
Grossman, Leonard	23	11(SCR2)
Hall, Nancy	101	2(SCR26), 17(308)
Hardenbrook, D. Bradford	128	1(573), 2(533), 2(SCR9), 4(556), 4(559), 4(SCR27),

Commenter	Document Number	Location of Comments/Responses [Section (Comment Number)]
NV Department of Wildlife		6(536), 11(537), 11(538), 11(540), 11(544), 11(548), 11(549), 11(SCR1), 11(SCR21), 11(SCR25), 13(51), 14(557), 14(SCR35), 15(558), 16(545), 16(547), 16(550), 16(551), 16(552), 16(554), 16(555), (535)
Harris, Michael	87, 97	11(SCR1), 11(SCR5), 11(SCR7), 16(269), 16(274), 12(569), 17(302)
Hiatt, John Red Rock Audubon Society	114	2(SCR26), 6(399), 6(492), 7(401), 10(SCR8), 11(SCR14), 11(SCR24), 11(SCR25), 14(SCR35), 15(SCR36), 16(406), 16(SCR38)
Hill, RoseAnn	41	11(SCR3), 11(SCR:4), 12(81)
Hirschlor, Rochelle	6	11(SCR5)
Hoversten, Mark UNLV Landscape	120, 130	2(SCR26), 5(SCR29), 11(SCR21), 11(SCR24), 14(SCR34), 14(SCR35), 18(SCR39)
Howland, Steve	49	2(SCR26), 4(SCR27), 5(SCR29), 10(SCR8), 11(SCR5), 11(SCR6), 18(SCR39)
Hyatt, John	79	10(SCR28), 11(SCR1), 11(SCR14), 16(242), 16(243), 11(246), 21(SCR:39)
James, Bill Friends of Sloan Canyon	110	2(SCR26), 11(SCR1), 11(SCR3), 11(SCR4), 11(SCR14), 11(SCR24), 12(SCR11), 14(SCR34), 16(SCR37), 16(SCR38), 19(SCR32)
Jensen, Marc	116	2(SCR:9)
Johnson, Stephen	106	2(SCR9), 11,(SCR1), 11(SCR3), 11(SCR5)
Jones, Leonard	7	11(SCR5)
Jones, Susan UNLV Landscape	121	2 (SCR26), 5(SCR29), 11(SCR21), 11(SCR24), 14(SCR34), 14(SCR35) , 18 (SCR39)
Kolacz, John Land Rover Club of Las Vegas	66	2(SCR9), 11(SCR1), 11(SCR5) , 11(SCR6)
Lanier, Linda Sun City Anthem Hiking and Outing Club	16	11(SCR3), 11(SCR4)
Lanier, Lynn Sun City Anthem Hiking and Outing Club	131	11(SCR2), 11(SCR6)
Levy, Seth American Hiking Society	115	2(SCR26), 5(SCR29), 11(408), 11(418), 11(421), (SCR1), 11(SCR10), 11(SCR14), 11(SCR21), 11(SCR22), 11(SCR25), 11(SCR41), 14(SCR35), 15(SCR36)
Little, David	108	2(SCR9), 11(SCR1), 11(SCR5)

Commenter	Document Number	Location of Comments/Responses [Section (Comment Number)]
Lofgren, Holli	18	11(SCR3), 11(SCR4)
Machon, JoAnn	43	11(SCR3)
Machon, Rick	42	11(SCR3)
McDonald, Dea Sun City Anthem	33	11(SCR4)
McLean, C	132	11(SCR3), 11(SCR4)
McLean, Patricia	44	11(SCR2), 11(SCR4)
Meyer, Larry	17	11(SCR3), 11(SCR4)
Miller, LeAnne Southern Nevada Water Authority	119	19(456)
Moore, Carl	47	2(SCR26), 11(96), 11(97), 11(99), 11(SCR1), 11(SCR7), 13(SCR43), 19(94)
Moore, Lloyd	31	15(63)
Mrowka, Rob Clark County	133	11(571), 16(572)
Murphy, Robert	20	11(SCR2), 11(SCR4), 13(41)
Murray, Robert	89	11(SCR5), 12(SCR11)
Or, Jeffrey	72, 83	2(SCR26), 11(SCR4), 10(SCR28)
Parris-Washington, Christine Las Vegas LandRover Club	64	2(SCR9), 11(SCR1), 11(SCR5), 11(SCR6)
Pooton, JoAnn	19	11(SCR3), 11(SCR4), 11(SCR6)
Rabick, Joseph	30	11(SCR3), 11(SCR4), 11(SCR6)
Rautenstrauch, David	75, 80, 84, 109	11(SCR1), 13(232), 2(SCR:9), 11(SCR5)
Reyling, George Sun City Hiking Club in Anthem	48, 51, 85	4(SCR27), 11(SCR3), 11(SCR4), 11(SCR2), 10(SCR8)
Rios, George	122	11(SCR5)
Robertson, Terri Friends of Sloan Canyon	82	4(SCR27), 10(SCR28)
Rugh, Art Sun City Anthem	27	11(SCR4)
Rugh, Pat	28	11(SCR4)

Commenter	Document Number	Location of Comments/Responses [Section (Comment Number)]
Sun City Anthem		
Schaefer, Terri	100	11(SCR1), 11(SCR2), 19(306)
Seyfried Jr., William	104	2(SCR26), 5(SCR29), 5(SCR30), 10(SCR8), 11(SCR3), 11(SCR4), 11(SCR14), 12(SCR11), 18(SCR40), 19(SCR:32), 19(SCR33)
Shanklin, Diane	65	2(SCR9), 11(SCR1), 11(SCR5), 11(SCR6)
Shaslowee, Ken	4	11(SCR5)
Sherratt, Russ Las Vegas Valley 4 Wheelers	74	11(229), 11(SCR1), 12(227)
Sherratt, Russ Las Vegas Valley 4 Wheelers	81	11(SCR1), 11(SCR14), 16(251)
Smith, Michael National Trust Historic Preservation	123	2(SCR26), 3(506), 3(507), 3(508), 4(SCR:27), 7(505), 8(500), 8(504), 10(SCR8), 11(498), 11(SCR1), 11(SCR10), 11(SCR25), 13(503)
Trinko, Mark Clark County MSHCP	70	2(SCR9), 11(SCR1), 11(SCR6)
Unreadable	37	11(SCR5), 18(73)
Unreadable	5	11(SCR5)
Urban, Ben	14	11(SCR3), 11(SCR4)
Van Ee, Jeff Nevada Outdoor Recreation Assoc.	53	15(SCR36), 17(131), 19(129), 19(130)
Vasconi, Bill Fraternity of the Desert Bighorns	54, 77,	16(132), 16(133), 16(134), 16(238), 16(SCR37)
Wade, Darrell	76	11(SCR1), 11(SCR14), 11(SCR:25), 13(233)
West, Favil Sun City Anthem	34, 91, 99	11(SCR4), 13(285), 11(SCR3)
Woodard, Rob Nevada Power Company	73	9(225)
Woody, Alanah NRAF	113	3(387), 3(388), 3(389), 3(392), 5(SCR29), 11(SCR14), 11(SCR21), 11(SCR22), 18(SCR39)

1.0 ABANDONED MINES

1(573)

Comment: Page 3-70, Abandoned Mines: There is no mention of performing wildlife surveys of abandoned mines prior to any closing as by backfilling. Survey should be a standard operating procedure in the event that animal occupancy warrants another course of action, such as installing a bat gate.

Response: As described in the Standard Operating Procedures section of Appendix A, if additional abandoned mines are found within the NCA, BLM would either remediate per the *Final Programmatic Environmental Assessment for Remediation of Abandoned Mine Safety Hazards*, or, if necessary, prepare a site-specific environmental assessment. The final Programmatic Environmental Assessment addresses impacts to wildlife, including those to bats.

2.0 ALTERNATIVES

2(SCR 9)

Summary Comment: Commenters recommended that BLM choose Alternative B or Alternative D as the preferred alternative. Some commenters felt that Alternative B would preserve and protect resources within the NCA and complies with the purpose and intent of the NCA. Some commenters felt that Alternative D would allow for more recreational uses, including OHV use, which they believe reflects Senatorial discussions. On the other hand, a commenter felt that Alternative B was unrealistic in addressing public use demands of the NCA. Another commenter felt that Alternative D would not preserve and protect resources in the NCA.

Summary Response: Alternative C is the preferred alternative, and is the basis for the proposed plan, because it provides for moderate levels of developed recreation, facilities, and transportation with management actions to ensure that neither resources nor visitor experiences are unacceptably degraded. The preferred alternative, selected from a range of reasonable options, represents an effort to provide balance in managing both resources and uses within the Sloan Canyon NCA. The criteria considered in selecting the preferred alternative included environmental impacts of the alternatives; issues raised through the planning process; public and cooperating agency input; the spirit and intent of the Clark County Act; NEPA; FLPMA; and the BLM Land Use Planning Handbook (H-1601-1).

2(SCR26)

Summary Comment: Commenters stated their support for Alternative C

Summary Response: The preferred alternative, Alternative C, which attempts to balance future visitor needs with resource protection, was selected after evaluating input from the public, cooperating agencies, and internal BLM resources specialists. Alternative C is preferred for all resources because it provides for moderate levels of developed recreation, facilities, and transportation while ensuring that neither resources nor visitor experience is unacceptably degraded.

2(533)

Comment: We remain very concerned to the extent management alternatives underscore entertainment of a greater variety of recreation-oriented activities. Perhaps this was unintentional through the Bureau's use of recreation-based analyses, concessions for certain enhancements in consideration of anticipated public demand, evolution of the Red Rock Canyon experience, and a congressional deadline of November 2005 in which to have a completed Sloan Canyon NCA RMP. While useful for planning concerning the human environment from the human perspective, recreational approaches do not adequately capture or confer perspectives and considerations necessary for appropriate conservation of biological, wildlife, and ecological processes. Change to the area, to the region, is inevitable, but we must not diminish the fact that

the entire land base of the Sloan Canyon NCA is home for one or more T&E or special status species that have lost populations and habitat elsewhere in southern Nevada. In this instance, we believe conservation and protection of biological and wildlife resources go hand in hand with that of archaeological and cultural resources. Title VI of the Act of 2002 does not speak to recreational enhancement or invention, recreation per se is not even mentioned. We do appreciate the Bureau's efforts to take into account the inevitable demands on Sloan Canyon NCA by an ever-growing, urban-oriented population center. Nearby, urban encroachment and visitation demands at Red Rock Canyon over the last 30 years resulted in changes of its designation from a National Recreation Area to National Conservation Area. Unfortunately, the inertia of the recreation-based custom and culture associated with the Red Rock Canyon experience continues to weight management actions addressing a variety of traditional and emerging recreational pursuits. The result has complicated if not compromised attainment of the more recent conservation goals and objectives for the Red Rock Canyon NCA. The history of Red Rock Canyon is not, and should not carry over to the Sloan Canyon NCA. The Department strongly believes that managers are not obliged to accommodate the entire diversity of recreational demands from adjacent urban areas; and, the Sloan Canyon NCA should not become a recreational relief valve for Red Rock Canyon. A factor continually overlooked by many interests commenting on this planning process is that Sloan Canyon unit is a conservation area, not a recreation area. The primary effort should be to truly retain the existing cultural, natural and ecological character of the Sloan Canyon area.

Response: The PRMP recognizes that recreation is not one of the purposes for designating the Sloan Canyon NCA, as described in the Sloan Canyon Act, Section 602. As stated in the Sloan Canyon NCA Act, the purpose of the NCA is to conserve, protect, and enhance for the benefit of present and future generations the cultural, archaeological, natural, wilderness, scientific, geological, historical, biological, wildlife, educational, and scenic resource of the NCA. The type and range of management actions described in the Draft RMP/EIS were designed to manage the NCA in a manner that would meet the intent of the Act. Because the rapidly growing metropolitan area surrounding the NCA, recreation will undoubtedly be one of the primary uses of the NCA. For this reason, a primary component of the RMP is flexible management guidance so that impacts from recreation can be monitored and actions taken, as necessary, to minimize impacts from recreation to the NCA's resources.

3.0 CULTURAL RESOURCES GENERIC COMMENT RESPONSES

3(387)

Comment: The rock art documentation recommendations in the Sloan Canyon NCA Draft meet IFRAO standards, but I would advise that the recording process not be put off for too long. This is not something that should be done "as time and funding allows" but should be a priority. The level of recording should be Class III as noted in the Management Plan – something that does not currently exist for this area. A Class III requires scaled drawings for every panel – it is important that these are done in the field rather than from photographs later. The drawings are the best tool for land managers to assess changes to panels without having to refer to photographs that are sometimes less clear. This also allows documentation of other extant impacts that are not always apparent in photographs. Drawing techniques should be non-invasive – direct tracings, rubbings, etc should not be permitted for any reason. Photographic documentation is also required in a Class III as well as detailed mapping.

Response: Recordation and monitoring of the Sloan Canyon Petroglyph Site would be an ongoing process and both activities are currently underway. The methods and techniques employed would be identified at the activity planning level rather than the RMP.

3(388)

Comment: The monitoring program has actually already begun, but I would recommend a far more frequent schedule of site visitation [Rock art sites], than is currently the norm for the Clark County

program (quarterly). Sloan Canyon already gets a fair number of visitors and that is only going to increase - site monitoring should escalate along with that visitation. At a minimum, weekly visits should be made, focusing on weekends and holidays during peak periods of visitation, but that would need to be increased after public visitation is increased. I would also strongly encourage on-going training for monitors – the current level of training is inadequate to allow a full understanding of why certain procedures are to be followed.

Response: Over 50 site stewards have been trained and are organized by the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office. Additional trainings are occurring on a regular basis. BLM and volunteer presence in the Sloan Canyon Petroglyph Site, as well as the remainder of the NCA, would increase as visitor levels indicate the need for additional oversight.

3(389)

Comment: I would suggest that in the determination of which sites are at risk or are highly sensitive, comparisons of the known distribution of rock art sites with current and anticipated visitation patterns should be made. In my experience, it's best to assess site sensitivity based on actual visitation patterns rather than on projections or models. There are rock art sites outside of the main canyon that people are already visiting, that may or may not fit the Archaeological Sensitivity Model – but they should be documented fully as well.

Response: Monitoring plans for recreation use, Wilderness use, and the planning of future facilities such as trails all include cultural resource evaluations, which would serve to identify resources, evaluate effects, and take appropriate actions.

3(392)

Comment: It should be strongly urged that any mitigation of vandalism be undertaken only by a trained rock art conservator - never by anyone who does not specialize in this work. There are only a small number of qualified individuals, which does make it difficult to schedule, however much of the conservation work done currently is to repair earlier untrained conservation attempts.

Response: The concern is noted, but this issue is an activity plan element and does not require a Resource Management Plan decision.

3(506)

Comment: The National Trust is supportive of the Cultural Resources Management Plan (CRMP), which is provided in Appendix D.

Response: Thank you.

3(507)

Comment: Unfortunately, BLM does not outline management objectives and goals that indicate how BLM intends to proactively identify, evaluate, and nominate cultural resources to the National Register of Historic Places, as required by Section 110 of the National Register of Historic Places (NHPA).

Response: A 20 percent sample survey for cultural resources and an ethnographic survey to identify potential intangible properties have already been conducted. Monitoring plans for recreation use, Wilderness use, and the planning of future facilities such as trails all include cultural resource evaluations, which would serve to identify resources, evaluate effects, and take appropriate actions. Appendix D, the Cultural Resources Management Plan, has been modified by clarifying that all cultural resource management would be carried out in accordance with the BLM/Nevada SHPO Statewide Protocol, including allocation of resources and determinations of eligibility.

3(508)

Comment: BLM has not identified priorities and/or goals for cultural resource inventories, or even if it intends to conduct proactive inventories. We recommend that BLM add this information to the Proposed RMP/Final EIS and amend the CRMP to reflect the requirements of Section 110 of the NHPA.

Response: Monitoring plans for recreation use, Wilderness use, and the planning of future facilities such as trails all include cultural resource evaluations, which would serve to identify resources, evaluate effects, and take appropriate actions. Appendix D, the CRMP, has been modified by clarifying that all cultural resource management would be carried out in accordance with the BLM/Nevada SHPO Statewide Protocol, including allocation of resources and determinations of eligibility.

3(519)

Comment: Page 2-15: Cultural Resources Common to All Alternatives: Public Use and Conservation for Future Use categories are assigned that may conflict if applied to the same property such as the Sloan Canyon Petroglyph Site. As mentioned above, there is a delicate balance to achieve and it would require monitoring of sites and adjusting actions throughout the life of the plan. We agree with the BLM that the requirements of maintaining characteristics of the wilderness would also help maintain the qualities that qualify this property for the National Register of Historic Places.

Response: SHPO's continued collaboration on management guidance for the Sloan Canyon Petroglyph Site would be an important part of ensuring protection of this important cultural resource. Additional requirements for maintaining Wilderness characteristics are included in Appendix C, the North McCullough Wilderness Management Plan.

3(520)

Comment: Page 2-15: It might be wise to include a statement that BLM would continue to consult with the SHPO under the Nevada State Protocol Agreement regarding actions with the potential to affect National Register eligible and listed properties.

Response: Appendix D, the CRMP has been modified by clarifying that all cultural resource management would be carried out in accordance with the BLM/Nevada SHPO Statewide Protocol, including allocation of resources and determinations of eligibility.

3(521)

Comment: Another action common to all alternatives listed in this section regards the development and implementation of a monitoring plan. We strongly support to the use of site stewards to monitor Sloan Canyon Petroglyphs and other National Register eligible sites within the NCA but feel that two components to this program is missing: 1)What is the threshold of effects for sites other than those within the Wilderness Area? When does an effect require some kind of action? If BLM is using thresholds for maintaining the wilderness to judge effects to historic properties, what are the thresholds for sites in the remainder of the NCA? 2)What possible actions could be taken if effects cross the threshold? It is our understanding that effects within the Wilderness would trigger actions to restore wilderness and National Register values. What actions could be taken both in the wilderness and the remainder of the NCA in the event that adverse effects occur?

Response: The introduction of Appendix D, the CRMP has been modified to state that activity-level cultural resources plans would be developed in the future to implement the Sloan Canyon RMP. Thresholds that could trigger possible actions could include development of social trails to individual petroglyphs or outlying sites or overt acts of vandalism. Interrelated Wilderness and recreation monitoring, as well as thresholds established through a process such a Limits of Acceptable Change would be considered when taking cultural resource related actions. Actions that could be taken to protect cultural resources include temporary closures, graffiti removal, site surveillance, and natural barriers.

3(525)

Comment: Under Alternative C, BLM is obliged to conserve for future use, half of known rock shelters and approximately half of known rock art sites would be conserved for future use and traditional use. With only 10% sample of the area, how would managers know what is "half"? For example, what if all rockshelters and rock art sites outside the canyon proper have already been discovered and documented? It is possible to make adjustments in the future?

Response: A 20 percent sample of the NCA does not account for all sites and categories, but it does provide a sound basis for a commitment of resources. A portion of the 20 percent sample was nonrandom and archaeologists specifically targeted areas with settings similar to Sloan Canyon for rock art and rockshelters. No sites of the magnitude of Sloan Canyon were found. This approach provides good confidence that a large percentage of the sites have been identified. Adjustments would be made in the future if additional sites are found.

3(526)

Comment: This CRMP [Cultural Resources Management Plan] cannot be used in its present form to evaluate cultural resources in the NCA for National Register eligibility. Please see comments below: Page D-2, second and third paragraphs: How do these three levels of significance relate to National Register criteria? An archaeological site can be eligible for inclusion in the National Register regardless of whether or not it has uninterpreted information. It may have contained information important in understanding of prehistory (such as Lovelock Cave) that has been recovered, and still meet National Register criterion d. In addition, sites are eligible because they may fall under the other three criteria of significance. For example, the Sloan Canyon Petroglyphs are eligible under Criteria C because of their artistic merit. Couldn't other petroglyphs in the NCA similarly be evaluated? How does thos "cultural context and research design" apply to resources of the historic period? Themes are identified but not research issues that could be addressed. Last, how does this apply to evaluating properties of religious and cultural importance to tribes? This section needs some work to make explicit that the discussion solely regards prehistoric sites that might be eligible for inclusion in the National Register under criterion D. Or, the section should be amended to include discussions on all cultural resources and how they might be evaluated.

Response: These levels of significance provide context for framing research questions for the NCA are not intended to be significance criteria for determining eligibility of historic properties. Appendix D, the CRMP has been modified by clarifying that all cultural resource management would be carried out in accordance with the BLM/Nevada SHPO Statewide Protocol, including allocation of resources and determinations of eligibility. In addition, the introduction of Appendix D, the CRMP has been modified to state that activity-level cultural resources plans would be developed in the future to implement the Sloan Canyon RMP.

3(527)

Comment: Page D-19: Once a determination is made that the remains are Native American, BLM must immediately notify and begin consultation with tribes. No activity must take place at the scene of discovery for 30 days until the appropriate tribe is identified and the BLM consults with the tribe regarding the disposition of the remains. No attempts should be made to excavate the remains. Why isn't this made explicit in the text?

Response: Part II of the CRMP has been modified to clarify Discovery Situations would be managed that in accordance with the BLM/Nevada SHPO Statewide Protocol.

3(528)

Comment: Page D-19 under 2: Consultation with tribes must precede any proposed treatment of burials discovered and any proposed excavation of sites. Advisory Council guidance dated May 19, 1999 states

that any archaeological site to be excavated must not contain or be likely to contain human remains, associated or unassociated funerary objects, sacred objects, or items of cultural patrimony. If the property, such as the Sloan Canyon Petroglyphs themselves, are significant for traditional cultural and religious importance to a tribe, they should not be excavated.

Response: All archaeological excavations would include a treatment plan for human remains and associated materials specifically designed for the project as part of the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) permit application. As part of the permit application, interested tribes would be offered the opportunity to review and comment on the plan as part of the ARPA permit process. Thus, no excavation could occur without the opportunity for tribal input.

3(529)

Comment: Page D-21-23: Site monitoring should only be one means of tracking deterioration of sites in the Sloan Canyon NCA. Would it not be appropriate to discuss law enforcement in this session? The Nevada SHPO supports the use of concealed video cameras in areas of highest archaeological sensitivity. However, what would be the result should the BLM through its monitors or law enforcement note effects to a particular site? What steps would be taken to curb any abuses if noted? As mentioned above, reference to a range of actions that could be taken would be helpful. The implementation of a monitoring plan is only part of the equation for maintaining integrity of historic properties; there should be some reference to actions that might be taken if effects occur.

Response: The hiring and use of both Law Enforcement and Rangers (non-law enforcement) is an administrative action not requiring a decision through this WMP. Wilderness Rangers are the first line contact with wilderness and backcountry users; and are responsible for monitoring for a variety of potential unauthorized incursions into the Wilderness. All regulations would be enforced by BLM Law Enforcement Agents and Law Enforcement Rangers. Violators would be detected through periodic patrol and investigative follow-up to reports by the public, BLM and other agency employees.

3(530)

Comment: Page D-26: Is it realistic to consider the placement barriers in the Sloan Canyon Wilderness or is this only applicable to the remainder of the conservation area?

Response: Natural barriers such as transplanted native cholla or other plants could be used to deter unauthorized access.

3(531)

Comment: Is it possible for the CRMP to be amended or adapted to changing conditions as needed to protect the National Register listed and eligible properties of the Sloan Canyon NCA? If monitoring demonstrates continued degradation of resources, it is possible to add action measures for treating adverse effects?

Response: Yes. The introduction of Appendix D, the CRMP has been modified to state that activity-level cultural resources plans would be developed in the future to implement the Sloan Canyon RMP.

4.0 DOCUMENT QUALITY

4(SCR27)

Summary Comment: Commenters complimented BLM on the Draft RMP/EIS. Commenters noted that the Draft RMP/EIS was thorough, all-encompassing, and comprehensive.

Summary Response: Thank you. BLM appreciates the acknowledgement and attributes the quality of this plan to the time and effort contributed by the cooperating agencies, the interested public, and the BLM planning team.

4(443)

Comment: There was one omission in the Index that would have been helpful. This is the inclusion of Management Emphasis Area, an important concept that appears a number of times in the text, including each alternative.

Response: BLM apologizes for any inconvenience in finding Management Emphasis Area discussions. BLM encourages the use of digital files and electronic search capabilities for finding specific information. Consequently, an index is not included in the PRMP; however, digital versions of the document may be obtained from the BLM, Las Vegas Filed Office.

4(444)

Comment: I also note that Visual Resource Inventory in the index lists pages that discuss related Visual Resource Management but not Inventory. Visual Resource Inventory only comes up in the last two pages cited in the Index.

Response: BLM apologizes for any inconvenience in finding Management Emphasis Area discussions. BLM encourages the use of digital files and electronic search capabilities for finding specific information. Consequently, an index is not included in the PRMP; however, digital versions of the document may be obtained from the BLM, Las Vegas Filed Office.

4(446)

Comment: In some cases, I find the alternatives rather conflicting, not consistently structured, and/or difficult to understand. Specifics associated with the alternatives need another look, and few of us are able to root through the entire Summary of Alternatives.

Response: The Sloan Canyon planning team acknowledges that it can be difficult to comprehend the differences in the range of alternatives. Consequently, considerable thought was given to ensure the material was presented as simply as possible. Techniques such as summary tables (both in the Executive Summary and throughout Chapter 2), as well as the use of many color maps were employed to convey the range of management actions.

4(556)

Comment: Chapter 5, CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION: Most of Chapter 5 is missing.

Response: BLM apologizes for distributing a copy of the DRMP/EIS with printing errors.

4(559)

Comment: Finally, inclusion of a list of acronyms and abbreviations near the Table of Contents will be very helpful as many of the acronyms and abbreviations were not defined before their use.

Response: In the DRMP/EIS, the acronym list was included after Chapter 5 and before the Glossary. It is in the same position in the PRMP. Acronyms and abbreviations are defined in the first use in every chapter.

5.0 FACILITIES

5(SCR29)

Summary Comment: Commenters suggested that a visitor center be built as close to the NCA boundary as possible. While another commenter suggested that a visitor center should not be built in the NCA, but instead should be located in the surrounding community. Commenters requested that the RMP contain a three-dimensional design vision, context-sensitive design guidelines, design vocabulary, design goals, and design controls for proposed facilities in the NCA. Commenters suggested that signage, maps, and information in the NCA should be meaningful, educational and informative.

Summary Response: The Sloan Canyon NCA Draft RMP/EIS provides general guidance for BLM's management of the NCA. Specifics relating to the visitor center, facilities, signage, maps, kiosks, and design would be addressed in an Interpretive Plan and a Design Plan that would be developed following the RMP planning process. The Interpretive Plan would include the development of appropriate interpretive services, facilities, programs, and media that would reinforce interpretive themes and messages by instilling a sense of respect and appreciation of the cultural and natural resources. The Design Plan would consider design guidelines, vision, goals, and controls for facilities proposed in the NCA. In addition, the facilities would complement the NCA by directing visitor attention toward the NCA's resources and away from the urban development that immediately borders much of the NCA. There would be a focus on design consistency and visual quality that would communicate a sense of place, imitate natural landscape patterns, and minimally disturb resources during design, construction, and maintenance.

5(SCR30)

Summary Comment: Commenters stated their support for a parking area in Hidden Valley. A commenter recommended more trailheads and staging areas and suggested that they are linked to roads and trails for access.

Summary Response: The Hidden Valley Trailhead would serve as an access point to the southern portion of the NCA, and 3 similar access points have been proposed (the visitor's center, Dutchman Pass trailheads, and Quo Vadis Trailhead. As described in Section 2.4.8 of the PRMP, additional facilities could be added throughout the NCA, as needed, in accordance with applicable MEA objectives. The facilities would be planned designed and constructed through a systematic process that would evaluate needs, potential uses, and public interest as well as the preparation of an environmental assessment.

5(491)

Comment: For wilderness, facilities should be located at appropriate points on the edge. This is particularly important for the handicapped and less physically endowed.

Response: Section 2.4.8 discusses the facilities proposed as part of the RMP. In general, they are located near the NCA boundary rather than the Wilderness boundary, which lies inside. There are no roads to the Wilderness boundary so the administrative support of facilities would be difficult. More facilities could be added as needed to support visitor use and resource protection.

6.0 FIRE

6(399)

Comment: A consequence of this will be a dramatic change in the fire regime from one of rare and inconsequential fires to a regime of much more frequent, larger fires. What, if anything, can be done to prevent this transition is unknown but managers must be aware of the changes taking place, plan to deal with the situation.

Response: As discussed in Appendix A, fire management would be implemented for the Sloan Canyon Fire Management Unit based on objectives included in the Las Vegas Field Office Fire Management Plan (BLM 1998b).

6(492)

Comment: Section 3.14 fails to recognize that past history is probably not a good guide to future fire behavior.

Response: Management actions presented in the PRMP would do little to change the fact that natural lightning ignitions are not common because of the sparseness and short stature of the vegetation, particularly on the rocky slopes and the ridgetops. Nonetheless, as Section 2.5.14 describes, maximum fire protection would be provided through a comprehensive fire detection system using a multi-agency approach.

6(536)

Comment: Wildlife fire management in the Sloan Canyon NCA should incorporate suppression of wildfire similarly to that adopted for desert tortoise critical habitats and ACECs. As important is development of an Emergency Fire Rehabilitation (EFR) plan. In the case of the McCullough Mountains, natural seeding processes would be precluded due to consequential conditions of a lack in significant residual standing plant community, an existing seed bank, or an adjacent seed source. Prevention of red brome dominance and noxious weed invasion should be high priority objectives in developing the rehabilitation and seeding plan. Public Law 101-286 states "it is in the best interest of the Nation to take swift action to rehabilitate burned forests" and public lands. The Bureau of Land Management's EFR program is intended to reduce invasion and establishment of invasive and noxious species for vegetation thereby minimizing the potential of wildland fire recurrence. An EFR plan would seem in conformance with provisions stated in Sections 602 and 605 of Title VI of the Act of 2002 (aka Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area Act).

Response: As section 2.5.13 describes, a goal of the wildland fire management would be to keep wildfire size to an absolute minimum to prevent conversion to red brome and other non-native grasses. Maximum fire protection would be provided through a comprehensive fire detection system using a multi-agency approach and a NCA staff resource advisor would be consulted on all fire in the NCA. In addition, section 2.4.11, vegetation management, lists goals, objectives, and actions specifically designed to protect the natural condition and biodiversity of the NCA by preventing or limiting the spread of noxious and invasive weeds.

7.0 GRAZING

7(401)

Comment: Commercial livestock grazing in the NCA is really not appropriate and should be phased out at the earliest opportunity.

Response: Title II of the Clark County Conservation of Public Land and Natural Resources Act of 2002, which designated the Sloan Canyon NCA and the North McCullough Wilderness, states that grazing that was established as of the date of enactment shall be allowed to continue subject to reasonable regulation, policies, and practices (Title II, Section 205 (b)).

7(505)

Comment: There is very little analysis about cultural resource impacts associated with grazing. It is clear that only one grazing allotment exists, Hidden Valley Allotment, and that it is an ephemeral allotment. Draft RMP at 3-63-64. However, it is not clear how future, continued grazing, depending on climatic conditions, will impact cultural resources. Moreover, BLM has not analyzed whether grazing is

compatible with the legislative purpose for Sloan Canyon NCA, nor has BLM identified specific forms of mitigation. All of this information would be helpful in evaluating BLM's management alternatives.

Response: Title II of the Clark County Conservation of Public Land and Natural Resources Act of 2002, which designated the Sloan Canyon NCA and the North McCullough Wilderness, states that grazing that was established as of the date of enactment shall be allowed to continue subject to reasonable regulation, policies, and practices (Title II, Section 205 (b)). The Hidden Valley allotment is open to livestock grazing, but because of the rugged terrain and lack of water, cattle typically do not wander into the NCA. This behavior would be reinforced because placement of range improvements (water) would not be allowed within the NCA (section 2.3.15). Therefore, impacts to cultural resources would be negligible and were not included.

8.0 IMPACTS

8(500)

Comment: Alternative C does not provide enough information about specific resources that will be impacted by management decisions.

Response: Chapter 4 of the PRMP discusses the impacts that could occur from implementing the management guidance in the proposed plan.

8(504)

Comment: We recommend that the Proposed RMP/Final EIS examine in greater detail the direct and indirect impacts on cultural resources, as well as provide measures to mitigate those potential impacts.

Response: Chapter 4 of the PRMP discusses the impacts that could occur from implementing the management guidance in the proposed plan. The introduction of Appendix D, the CRMP has been modified to state that activity-level cultural resources plans would be developed in the future to implement the Sloan Canyon RMP. These plans would consider direct and indirect impacts from specific activities and would recommend mitigation actions, if necessary.

8(514)

Comment: The DEIS references standard operating procedures that will be used as guidance for activities related to management of the Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area (NCA) (Appendix A, Section 3.0). Examples include best management practices identified by the State of Nevada to minimize impacts to water quality and dust control permits obtained from local air quality management district. The document does not provide information on specific mitigation measures that will be used to reduce impacts from activities performed under the Resource Management Plan (RMP).

Response: Clark County has been designated by Governor of the State of Nevada as the organization responsible for regulatory compliance and oversight for air quality in southern Nevada. Specific air quality mitigation actions would be developed on a case-by-case basis as part of activity specific plans and permits. For example, planned construction activities are temporary in nature and fall under section 94 of the Clark County Department of Air Quality and Environmental Management regulations. Any construction disturbance greater than 1/4 acre requires a valid dust control permit from the DAQEM, which would stipulate best management practices and dust control measures. As described in section 3.15, because of the steep bedrock terrain essentially no groundwater sources existed within the NCA; however, the North McCullough Range does provide a relatively small amount of recharge to the alluvial aquifers in adjacent valleys. No perennial streams exist within the NCA. In addition, because of the very dry climate, the good vegetation cover, lack of grazing and mineralization and small OHV use, surface

water quality is good. As required by the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (Clean Water Act) Section 208, all activities associated with water pollution problems must be planned and managed through an integrated, area-wide water quality management program through a 20 year planning horizon. Per the Nevada Revised Statutes, the Clark County Board of County Commissioners is designated as the Area-Wide Water Quality Management Planning Organization within Clark County. BLM would work with the Board's Water Quality Planning Team to fulfill responsibilities to develop and ensure compliance with area-wide water quality management plans. These plans present objectives, policies, programs, and an implementation schedule for managing water quality in the county.

8(515)

Comment: Potential effects from the construction of the North McCullough Road right-of-way are described in Section 4.2. Depending upon the selection of the northern or southern corridor, potential effects include disturbance to 1,154 acres of habitat of the federally endangered desert tortoise and significant erosion due to steep slopes. Impacts also include PM₁₀ (particulate matter with a diameter of 10 microns or less) emissions from construction and operational activities (up to 13.1 tons/year and 42.4 tons/year, respectively). There is no discussion of mitigation measures that could reduce the effects of these environmental impacts. The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) should evaluate the feasibility of adopting mitigation to avoid, reduce or compensate for the adverse environmental impacts from construction and other activities under the RMP. All relevant, reasonable mitigation measures that could improve the project should be identified. In addition, because a portion of the NCA is in Las Vegas Valley PM₁₀ nonattainment area, EPA recommends use of the following measures to reduce construction emissions of criteria air pollutants and hazardous air pollutants (air toxics): Reduce emissions of diesel particulate matter (DPM) and other air pollutants by using particle traps and other technological or operational methods. Control technologies such as traps control approximately 80 percent of DPM. Specialize catalytic converters (oxidation catalysts) control approximately 20 percent of DPM, 40 percent of carbon monoxide emissions, and 50 percent of hydrocarbon emissions; ensure that diesel powered construction equipment is properly tuned and maintained, and shut off when not in direct use; prohibit engine tampering to increase horsepower; locate diesel engines, motors, and equipment as far as possible from residential areas and sensitive receptors (schools, daycare centers, and hospitals); require low sulfur diesel fuel ([less than] 15 part per million), if available; reduce construction-related trips of workers and equipment, including trucks; lease or buy newer, cleaner equipment (1996 or newer model), using a minimum of 75 percent of the equipment's total horsepower; use engine types such as electric, liquified gas, hydrogen fuel cells, and/or alternative diesel formulations; adopt a Construction Emissions Mitigation Plan to reduce construction emissions; work with the local air pollution control district(s) to implement the strongest mitigation for reducing construction emissions.

Response: The Sloan Canyon NCA Act directed BLM to grant the City of Henderson a right-of-way for the North McCullough Road. In addition, the Act requires BLM to recommend a location for the North McCullough Road as part of the RMP. BLM recommends that the ROW be issued for the northern corridor. Any future development related to the road and trail would require additional environmental review, including resource mitigation. Please note that air quality mitigation measures for PM₁₀, carbon monoxide, and ozone are specified in state implementation plans (SIP) for each criteria pollutant. The SIP for zone is currently in progress and is not due to be implemented until 2009. Specific air quality mitigation actions would be developed on a case-by-case basis as part of activity specific plans and permits. For example, planned construction activities are temporary in nature and fall under section 94 of the Clark County Department of Air Quality and Environmental Management regulations. Any construction disturbance greater than 1/4 acre requires a valid dust control permit from the DAQEM, which would stipulate best management practices and dust control measures.

8(516)

Comment: The Sloan Canyon NCA RMP covers a 20-year planning period. As stated in the document, the adjacent cities of Las Vegas and Henderson form one of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in the United States. Due to the proximity of these areas, environmental effects from this growth will have an impact on the NCA. Although references are made to these environmental pressures in the document, their impacts are not addressed in the cumulative impacts analysis. For example, the document states that air quality and hydrology are two resources that have the potential for cumulative impacts (p. 4-133). However, the document provides no analysis for how anticipated growth in the area will impact air quality in the NCA over the next 20 years. The document also indicates that the cumulative impacts on hydrology will be negligible without analyzing the potential impacts from groundwater development projects that might effect the numerous springs and seeps in the NCA and the flora and fauna that depend on them. The FEIS should provide a substantive discussion of, and quantify where possible, the cumulative effects of the project when considered with other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable projects, regardless of what agency or person undertakes those actions. The document should also propose mitigation for all cumulative impacts, and clearly state the lead agency's mitigation responsibilities of other entities.

Response: The sentence that introduces section 4.16.4 was written incorrectly. The list of resource areas that have potential cumulative effects should not have been the entire list of resources, rather the resources with cumulative effects should have been: recreation, cultural resources, visual resources, lands and realty, vegetation, wildlife, and socioeconomics. Cumulative effects of all other resources, including air quality and water resources, are negligible and should not have been on the list. The text has been corrected in the PRMP. The determination of cumulative effects of air quality was based on the comprehensive air quality model developed by BLM for the Las Vegas Valley Disposal Boundary EIS. This study provided a quantitative assessment of future air quality trends in the Las Vegas Valley utilizing a state-of-the-art Eulerian dispersion model known as the Community Multiscale Air Quality model. This air quality model, which assess the air quality trends for the Las Vegas Valley could not distinguish changes in air quality related to new home development after land disposal actions from the overall changes in air quality throughout the region. Consequently, the cumulative impacts from the relatively small, short term construction projects proposed by this RMP would also be indistinguishable. As described in section 3.15, because of the steep bedrock terrain essentially no groundwater sources existed within the NCA; however, the range does provide a relatively small amount of recharge to the alluvial aquifers in adjacent valleys. No perennial streams exist within the NCA. In addition, because of the very dry climate, the good vegetation cover, lack of grazing and mineralization and small OHV use, surface water quality is good.

9.0 LANDS AND REALTY

9(225)

Comment: We [Nevada Power Company] currently have large transmission line corridors that go through the Sloan National Conservation Area. In the future, there will be a need to either upgrade those lines for additional power or just the actual need to go in there and maintain them. Right now, 75 percent of the power that comes from the southern portion of the valley goes through those couple corridors that go through Sloan. So with – I guess I'd like to see more specific language that would address any upgrading of those lines and any kind of maintenance that would need to be done over the next course of several years.

Response: Any maintenance and operational activities would be subject to the stipulations that accompanied the issuance of the ROW. As described in section 2.3.9, existing ROW grants may be modified to meet the intent of the Sloan Canyon NCA Act, and any amendments to existing ROWs would be considered on a case-by-case basis and authorized only if they serve the purposes of the NCA.

10.0 PURPOSE AND NEED

10(SCR8)

Summary Comment: Commenters requested that the NCA be managed for conservation and kept in its current state. A commenter suggested that recreational uses on other BLM lands should also be emphasized and utilized to protect the character of the NCA.

Summary Response: The proposed plan provides for moderate levels of developed recreation, facilities, and transportation with management actions to ensure that neither resources nor visitor experiences are unacceptably degraded. The proposed plan was selected from a range of reasonable options and represents an effort to provide balance in managing both resources and uses within the Sloan Canyon NCA. The criteria considered in developing the proposed plan included environmental impacts of the alternatives; issues raised through the planning process; public and cooperating agency input; the spirit and intent of the Sloan Canyon NCA Act; NEPA; FLPMA; and the BLM Land Use Planning Handbook (H-1601-1).

10(SCR28)

Summary Comment: Commenters believe that the planning decisions presented in the Draft RMP/EIS are long term and affect the future visitors of the NCA.

Summary Response: The decisions contained in the Sloan Canyon NCA RMP will guide the future management of the NCA for the next 20 years. The RMP contains two types of decisions, land use planning decisions and implementing decisions. The land use planning decisions establish goals and objectives for managing the NCA's resources, including associated actions and uses. The implementing decisions constitute BLM's final approval for on-the-ground actions to proceed.

11.0 RECREATION

11(SCR1)

Summary Comment: Some commenters believe that an OHV area should be designated within the NCA, because the area has historically been used for OHV recreation for decades in the past. They suggest several areas that would be ideal locations for OHV use including the east side of the North McCullough Range and the south side of Black Mountain. These commenters state that responsible OHV users police themselves to minimize environmental impacts and that organized groups have been very involved in land cleanups and reporting illegal activities. Commenters believe that OHV use provides many benefits, including providing access for people with limited mobility, and assisting in administrative activities such as fire fighting by creating new trails and preventing natural revegetation of old trails for access by fire vehicles, while causing little environmental damage. Suggestions for recreation OHV management range from identifying a relatively small fenced area, to designating existing roads and trails, to providing, creating, and developing new "extreme" trails with associated user fees. Commenters argue that it is unfair to eliminate OHV use while other forms of recreation, such as hiking and mountain biking are allowed and point out that OHV recreation is being restricted from many traditional use areas. Conversely, other commenters believe that OHV use should be banned from the NCA for various reasons, including its incompatibility with the Sloan Canyon NCA Act, the inherent damage to environmental resources, the difficulties for BLM to manage limited use areas if they were designated, and the fact the most of the NCA is in the Clark County non-attainment area for PM10.

Summary Response: Most of the western and northern portions of the NCA, including the areas that receive the greatest amount of unauthorized off-highway vehicle (OHV) use, are within Clark County's air quality nonattainment boundary for particulate matter. Off-highway use in this area has been prohibited by Clark County and the Las Vegas BLM since 1998 (Las Vegas Resource Management Plan).

Unauthorized OHV activity has increased dramatically in recent years in the northeast portion of the NCA. As a result, numerous unauthorized routes and trails have been created and large portions of the area are experiencing resource damage from braided routes, habitat fragmentation, disturbance on steep grades, and the pioneering of new routes. Most importantly, the purpose of Sloan Canyon NCA, as directed by Congress in the Sloan Canyon NCA Act subsection 602, is “to conserve, protect and enhance for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations the cultural, archaeological, natural, wilderness, scientific, geological, historical, biological, wildlife, educational, and scenic resources of the Conservation Area.” Subsection 605(c) of the Act states that the Secretary of the Interior is to “allow only such uses of the Conservation Area that the Secretary determines would further the purpose described under subsection 602” (above). The proposed management plan seeks to provide recreational opportunities that are consistent with the directives provided by the Act. The BLM Las Vegas Field Office is very supportive of OHV use and recognizes OHV use as a legitimate use of public lands. While OHV opportunities are not available within the Sloan NCA boundaries, OHV opportunities exist in the adjacent BLM lands. The BLM Las Vegas Field Office manages approximately 2.1 million acres for OHV use, including the land adjacent to the Sloan Canyon NCA. The Jean/Roach Dry Lakes Special Recreation Management Area lies directly southwest of the Sloan Canyon NCA, between the McCullough Mountain Range and Good Springs, Nevada. This portion of public lands is managed for intensive OHV opportunities including OHV racing. Furthermore, the BLM Las Vegas Field Office, in cooperation with the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is working on a comprehensive OHV strategy for southern Nevada, that will include completing a recreation facilities inventory and OHV roads and trails inventory within Clark County. BLM will complete Recreation Area Management Plans for the approximately 2.1 million acres, that will specifically target recreation opportunities within these public lands. Completing these plans will also be a public process and participation is encouraged. Please contact the Recreation Department at (702) 515-5000 for more information or to be added to the mailing list for meeting notification of future recreation planning meetings.

11(SCR2)

Summary Comment: Commenters believe that only two hiking trails would be designated within the NCA under the preferred alternative. Some commenters suggested that cross-country hiking be allowed for the enjoyment and appreciation of the outdoor experience provided by the NCA.

Summary Response: This is not correct. Additional trails would be planned, designed, and constructed through a systematic process that would evaluate needs, potential uses, suitable destinations, and public interest, through an environmental assessment. Under the proposed plan, a hiking trail system with a wide range of uses is anticipated. Hiking trails would not be limited to the three rights-of-way for hiking trails that were previously issued to the City of Henderson, as prescribed by the Sloan Canyon NCA Act (one is included in the ROW for the North McCullough Road).

11(SCR3)

Summary Comment: Commenters indicated that it is not logical to limit hiking to designated trails where no trails currently exist (referring to the northern and western portions of the NCA (Area “L” on Figure 2.2)).

Summary Response: The proposed management plan has been modified to allow cross country hiking in “Area L” until BLM trails are established and in use, after which, some or all of “Area L” may be restricted to hiking on designated trails. Additional trails would be planned, designed, and constructed through a systematic process that would evaluate needs, potential uses, suitable destinations, and public interest, through an environmental assessment. Under the proposed plan, a hiking trail system with a wide range of uses is anticipated. Hiking trails would not be limited to the three rights-of-way for hiking trails

that were previously issued to the City of Henderson, as prescribed by the Sloan Canyon NCA Act (one is included in the ROW for the North McCullough Road).

11(SCR4)

Summary Comment: Commenters felt that access to Black Mountain would be restricted and prohibited and recommended that the unauthorized trail constructed to Black Mountain be improved, maintained, and designated for hiking use. A few commenters requested that social trails to Sutor Peak and Hanna Peak be evaluated and improved as well.

Summary Response: The proposed plan has been modified to allow consideration of the unauthorized Black Mountain trail and social trails in the trail planning process described in GCR3. However, as on all public lands, any unauthorized surface disturbance, including unauthorized trail construction, is prohibited.

11(SCR5)

Summary Comment: Commenters would like the NCA to remain open to all activities, OHV, horses, bicycles, family cars, hikers, dirt bikes, and recreational shooting, as it has been in the past. Commenters suggested that the NCA not be limited, closed off, or restricted. Some commenters requested that different interest groups, including OHV users have equal access to the NCA. A few commenters believe that only a small portion of the NCA is fragile, requiring protection, and that the public should be educated about the use of the area.

Summary Response: In November 2002, Congress designated the Sloan Canyon (NCA) to preserve and protect a portion of southern Nevada's Mojave Desert as a permanent asset for future generations. The Sloan Canyon NCA Act directs the Secretary of the Interior, through BLM, to manage the Sloan Canyon NCA in a manner that conserves, protects, and enhances the Conservation Area's resources for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations. The purpose of the Sloan Canyon NCA Act is to conserve, protect, and enhance the cultural, archaeological, natural, wilderness, scientific, geological, historical, biological, wildlife, educational, and scenic resources, which are important reasons for the establishment of the NCA. The designation of the North McCullough Wilderness, administered under the Wilderness Act of 1964 and the Clark County Act, Title II ("Wilderness Areas") (Appendix A), requires that 14,763 acres within the NCA be preserved and protected in their natural, primitive condition. In addition, the Sloan Canyon NCA Act and the Clark County Act, Title II ("Wilderness Areas"), sets a number of ground rules for the development of a management plan for the NCA and the Wilderness. Chapter 1, Section 1.1, of the PRMP contains additional information on the designating Acts. In addition, Section 605(c) of the Sloan Canyon Act requires the Secretary of the Interior to allow only those uses that would further the purpose of the NCA as defined by the Act. Consequently, not all recreational activities are appropriate for all area the NCA.

11(SCR6)

Summary Comment: Commenters offered to volunteer to mark, construct, improve, and maintain OHV and hiking trails in the NCA.

Summary Response: Currently, BLM is hosting volunteer desert cleanups for trash removal on a monthly basis. In addition, BLM has an established volunteer program that uses volunteers for wilderness monitoring and projects. Trails will planned, designed, and constructed through a systematic process which includes an environmental assessment.

11(SCR7)

Summary Comment: Comments regarding recreational shooting within the NCA ranged from strong support for a controlled area or range to recommendations that it be banned or be limited to specific areas.

Summary Response: As stated in Section 2.10.2 of the PRMP, designated target shooting facilities were not considered for several reasons: they are incompatible with the purpose of the NCA, there are existing recreational shooting facilities throughout the Las Vegas Valley, including Boulder City and North Las Vegas; and they generate hazardous materials through lead accumulation in bullet impact areas. Recreational shooting was banned in approximately the northern half of the NCA by the Las Vegas RMP in 1998. Unauthorized target shooting is a primary source of trash and waste deposits on the NCA and is a source of safety concerns because of the NCA's close proximity to residential areas. However, hunting, in conformance with State of Nevada laws and regulations (including distance from occupied buildings, etc.) is specifically allowed by the Sloan Canyon NCA Act.

11(SCR10)

Summary Comment: Some commenters requested that mountain biking be allowed in the NCA on trails because it is dangerous to ride on roads and it does not affect equestrian users. Some commenters requested that mountain biking be prohibited in the NCA because it can affect species habitats, spread invasive species, damage cultural resources, increase risk of injury, and increase erosion.

Summary Response: To reduce conflicts among users and to minimize resource impacts, mountain biking would be allowed on a limited system of designated multiple use trails and on designated vehicle roads. The trails would be planned, designed, and constructed through a systematic process that would evaluate needs, potential uses, suitable destinations, and public interest, through an environmental assessment.

11(SCR14)

Summary Comment: Some commenters suggested that campfires be allowed but be limited, restricted, or be prohibited in the NCA and the Wilderness. Commenters suggested that camping stoves be used for food preparation and campers should bring in fuel for campfires. A few commenters requested that BLM designate camping areas and as well as allow primitive, dispersed camping.

Summary Response: The proposed management plan has been modified to require that all fuels for campfires would have to be packed in and packed out, and no natural fuels in the NCA can be used. Based on public response and cooperating agency comments, BLM would encourage the use of portable gas, jellied petroleum, petroleum or pressurized liquid fuel stoves for cooking. Primitive, dispersed camping and associated campfires would be allowed in designated areas (see PRMP Figure 2.6) of the NCA. Constructed campfire rings and building fires against rock faces would not be allowed. Restrictions on fires, camping, and nighttime use of the Petroglyph Management Area would be implemented, with special circumstance exceptions.

11(SCR16)

Summary Comment: I believe that part of conservation is preserving the rights we have. Having off road access to desert near my home has provided my family with an enjoyable outlet to spend quality time together to some extent most every weekend of the year.

Summary Response: GCR that addresses comments that people want the BLM to allow all the activities that have been traditionally occurring in the NCA. (No change in management, such as the use of OHV, even though they have been prohibited since the LVRMP?).

11(SCR20)

Summary Comment: Supporting equestrian trails that form loops, and requests for site specific issues such as staging areas, trails, and weed free hay.

Summary Response: GCR that addresses specific equestrian trail issues such as loop trails, trailheads, weed free hay, and staging areas.

11(SCR21)

Summary Comment: Commenters suggested that dogs be limited or prohibited in the NCA because keeping dogs on a leash and picking up feces is not enforceable. Also, a commenter requested that dogs be kept on leashes in the NCA.

Summary Response: The proposed management plan has been modified to allow leashed dogs only in hiking areas “L” (Figure 1.1). Based on concerns for wildlife and human health and safety dogs would be prohibited in the remainder of the NCA. Dog feces would have to be immediately be picked up and packed out, and disposal bags would be available at trailheads for convenience and would encourage appropriate recreational behavior.

11(SCR22)

Summary Comment: Commenters suggested that rock climbing should be allowed in the NCA but not in the Sloan Canyon Petroglyph Site. One commenter suggested that rock climbing be prohibited in the NCA.

Summary Response: Traditional rock climbing with no permanent anchors and bouldering would be allowed throughout the NCA for visitors who enjoy the sport. However, rock climbing and bouldering would not be allowed in the Petroglyph Management Area and its northern access, and identified sensitive resource areas.

11(SCR24)

Summary Comment: Commenters requested that rock hounding be prohibited in the NCA.

Summary Response: The management plan has been modified to prohibit rock hounding throughout the NCA.

11(SCR25)

Summary Comment: A commenter suggested that equestrian trails should be designated as separate from hiking trails. Another commenter noted that hiking and equestrian use could be compatible. It was suggested that the NCA have equestrian loops and that equestrian users be allowed to camp with horses. Some commenters asked for no constraints on equestrian use. While another commenter requested that equestrian use be prohibited in the Sloan Canyon Petroglyph Site. It was suggested that equestrian use in the Wilderness should only be on designated trails and that no cross-country equestrian use should be allowed in the Wilderness. A commenter requested that equestrian use be prohibited from water at or near wildlife water developments. It was noted that it is not possible to monitor the use of certified weed free hay. Another commenter indicated that there is little or no analysis in the Draft RMP/EIS on the impacts of cross-country equestrian use, and that these impacts should be analyzed.

Summary Response: Equestrian use is provided for in the proposed plan. However, in addition to the management actions of the proposed plan, which take these comments into account, equestrian use would be limited by the fact that no water sources exist in the NCA. The use of wildlife waters for any other purpose is prohibited. As with all activities authorized within the NCA, the effects of equestrian use would be monitored and management can be adjusted within the parameters of the proposed plan in the future if effects warrant.

11(68)

Comment: An alternative designated as "preferred" that significantly changes prior usage of some of the land in SCNCA. Specifically, off highway vehicle use is prohibited throughout the NCA, off trail hiking is prohibited in the northwest quadrant (27% of the area) which borders the City of Henderson, and equestrian use is restricted to designated trails in the north half of the NCA most accessible to vehicle access(cross country use is allowed in the southern half). You should note that traditional use of significant portions of the NCA would be changed under this alternative.

Response: The Alternatives in the Draft RMP/EIS reflect multiple use management actions. This direction indicates that not all uses need to be accommodated in all areas. Not all areas would be open to all types of uses in the planning area. Additionally, not all areas would be open to uses in the same timeframe. Off-highway use in this area has been prohibited by Clark County and the BLM Las Vegas Field Office since 1998 (Las Vegas Resource Management Plan). Unauthorized OHV activity has increased dramatically in recent years in the northeast portion of the NCA. Within Las Vegas Field Office, approximately 2.8 million acres of public lands in Clark and Nye Counties are currently available for OHV use on existing roads, trails, and wash bottoms. The proposed management plan has been modified to allow cross country hiking in “Area L” until BLM trails are established and in use, after which, some or all of “Area L” may be restricted to hiking on designated trails. Additional trails would be planned, designed, and constructed through a systematic process that would evaluate needs, potential uses, suitable destinations, and public interest, through an environmental assessment. Under the proposed plan, a hiking trail system with a wide range of uses is anticipated.

11(71)

Comment: I also support the Sun City Anthem board proposal that is against access through Anthem. Eastern and Anthem parkway are already overcrowded and have golf cart access. The speed limit has just recently been reduced to 35 mph because of the amount of traffic.

Response: Sloan Canyon is an NCA must be accessible to all who chose to visit the area. BLM is working closely with the City of Henderson to identify access routes as residential development continues to expand towards the NCA boundary. The alignment of the North McCullough Road ROW, was proposed by the City of Henderson in its ROW application to BLM.

11(96)

Comment: I am hoping that orienteering would be allowed, as it is in other NCAs in other states. Orienteer with compass and map proceed on foot from a designated parking area at staggered intervals to locate as quickly as possible coded markers placed on features in the terrain. Orienteering is designed to be gentle on the terrain. Orienteering markers are temporary and can be placed to avoid sensitive areas. The markers are placed and collected in a day or two. The location of the markers would change from event to event. Events would be limited to a few hours on one or two weekends a year. The number of participants is not large. (Currently (2005) there are only three active and experienced orienteers in the Las Vegas area.) Orienteer do not follow each other but walk or jog on routes of their own choosing. After the event, there would be no "user" trails in the terrain. It would certainly be appropriate to require a SRP for these events. Although I am not a professional mapper, I am working on an orienteering map of this area. I am forwarding a preliminary copy of this map which shows some of the area I have covered to Sarah Sutherland. Please do not copy the map. Perhaps BLM would have non-orienteering use for the finished map in the future and could copy it.

Response: Orienteering would not be allowed within the NCA unless a special recreation permit is issued, which would be issued at the discretion of the BLM Authorizing Officer.

11(97)

Comment: I note that geo-caching would be prohibited under the plan. This makes sense since the caching sites are permanent and there is a possibility of environmental damage near them. Also, there is not limit on the timing of visits and the number of participants. How many local geocachers are there? Nobody knows.

Response: The PRMP prohibits geocaching within the NCA.

11(99)

Comment: I have not seen a single human-powered mountain bike in the area [northeast]. And there are very few, if any, hikers. The area is so large and undeveloped and there are so many dry water-courses and OHV-made trails ready-made for hikers and bikers to explore that spending a lot of time and money developing hiking and biking trails would seem to be unnecessary.

Response: Unauthorized OHV trails do not meet trail design and construction standards, which are developed to protect natural resources. All roads and not designated for public use could be physically barricaded or restored to natural conditions.

11(229)

Comment: There's a lot of companies in the valley, Pink Jeep Tours is one of them that offer scenic trails or scenic rides for people. Have they been contacted or has that even been taken into account to set up where these companies can maintain a living here in the valley and provide the use for the people that come to visit? Which would be twofold, income for the company and income for the BLM, because I'm sure you're going to charge them a fee to get a permit to do that.

Response: As stated in section 2.3.2 of the PRMP, outfitters and guides would be required to obtain a Special Recreation Permit to operation within the NCA.

11(374)

Comment: A gradual increase in the number of trails would help keep existing trails from being worn beyond repair.

Response: Under the proposed plan, a hiking trail system with a wide range of uses is anticipated.

11(382)

Comment: The proposed trailheads are all placed close to the roads which prevents traveling across the area with horse trailers. At least one or two areas should be provided where the unattended parked rigs are not visible from the road for obvious reasons. Many horse trailers now contain living quarters and rest rooms and they should be allowed access to areas where primitive camping is allowed. They do not need to be far from the roads, just out of sight.

Response: The proposed facilities and trail heads are discussed in section 2.3.8. Camping is not allowed at the proposed facilities (Figure 2.6) and permits for overnight parking to support activities such as camping and night riding would be required and issued in accordance with NCA policy.

11(408)

Comment: Trail use should be restricted to designated trails, and cross country hiking should be restricted. Un-controlled cross country hiking can fragment habitats, increase the spread of invasive species and risk the damage of undocumented cultural and historic resources. Hiking trails must be established and maintained to allow hikers access while simultaneously mitigating excessive impact.

Response: Under the proposed plan, a hiking trail system with a wide range of uses is anticipated. Based on likely amounts of use and in an effort to preserve visual and biological resources the use areas were designated for different types of hiking. Near the populated areas and trail heads, trail use areas were identified. In this area, hikers must stay on trails once they are established and in use. Cross country hiking is allowed within the remainder of NCA. In the Wilderness, social trails resulting in resource damage would be restored.

11(418)

Comment: Cross country hiking should not be allowed in the Wilderness. Hiking in wilderness areas should be restricted to designated trails. Accordingly, hiking trails should be built that manage access while diminishing overall erosion and impact.

Response: Three trails are designated in the Wilderness under the proposed plan. Additional trails would be added to the system as need arises, provided natural and wilderness characteristics are not substantially impacted.

11(421)

Comment: “Restore new social trails after completing an minimum requirement/minimum tool analysis.” This language should be struck and replaced with the language, verbatim, from “Alternative B:” “Restore visible portions of new social trails using nonmechanized means and native vegetation. Restore non-visible portions naturally.”

Response: The restoration of social trails located in the Wilderness are discussed in detail in sections 4.1.1 and 4.12 of the Wilderness Management Plan, Appendix C.

11(434)

Comment: My main problem with Alt. C is with the MEA Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized Zone (P 2-56), which in the Draft extends only along the east slope as far north as the Rattlesnake Canyon Road and its extension west. I think that this zone should extend north along the range crest to encompass Black Mtn summit and should also include at least portions of both the east and west slopes of Black Mountain. Black Mountain is the high point of the dramatic crestline which extends north from within the wilderness with no change in defacto wilderness characteristics. It is an icon for the range and this crestline, which represents the culmination of the range, and is the one primitive feature in the NCA coveted by most hikers. I am amazed that the wilderness boundaries did not encompass the peak. I don’t think it should be placed in a MEA Roded Natural Zone where one might even conceive of future access by, or identification with, a road.

Response: The MEA map has been extended further north along the eastern side of the escarpment.

11(435)

Comment: I also believe that the MEA Semi-Primitive Zone should encompass the eastern escarpment, and in fact the entire east slope strip, as far north as the Quo Vadis Mine Road, as depicted in Alt. B. This area is inherently part of Black Mountain and largely contains the same characteristics as the depicted Semi-Primitive Zone farther south. It also lies within the Draft’s VRM Class II area, which I think is most compatible with a MEA Semi-Primitive Zone. I don’t think Rattlesnake Canyon Road, over its approximately 1-mile length, needs closure to be compatible with this proposal as it is a relatively obscure feature. Cross-country hiking as proposed in Alt. C would be compatible with this change in MEA east slope zoning (P 2-59).

Response: The MEA map has been extended further north along the eastern side of the escarpment.

11(437)

Comment: The west slopes of Black Mountain, perhaps north to the access road to Black Mtn Communication Site, should in my view have MEA Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized Zoning. This embraces the idea that the slope is a feature of the Black Mountain icon with its character remaining as near to that of the wilderness farther south as is possible.

Response: The west slope of Black Mountain remains designated as roded natural, based on the anticipated human interactions and the potential for trail development (see section 2.3.1).

11(440)

Comment: I do not believe trails should be provided within the North McCullough Wilderness unless necessary for resource protection, as for instance to solve a problem of a braided network of social trails that may develop.

Response: Three trails are designated in the Wilderness under the proposed plan. Additional trails would be added to the system as need arises, provided natural and wilderness characteristics are not substantially impacted. The restoration of social trails located in the Wilderness are discussed in detail in sections 4.1.1 and 4.2 of the Wilderness Management Plan, Appendix C.

11(441)

Comment: A uniform social trail in a certain area, as along a wash bottom, does not necessarily require a formal trail being constructed or the area closed, its presence merely defining a logical route to a destination in a primitive setting. Sometimes, a short constructed segment may cure a resource damage problem without destroying the sense of wilderness that the simple path is in tune with. I guess this comes under the heading of LAC.

Response: Additional information on trail development in the Wilderness can be found in the Wilderness Management Plan, Appendix C.

11(498)

Comment: There is a discrepancy between the mileage provided for all unauthorized OHV routes within the NCA, 62.53 miles, and the total number of "closed" routes, 34 miles.

Response: The number of miles of road closed to licensed motorized vehicles (49.1 in the proposed plan) refers to roads only. The larger mileage of unauthorized OHV does not include these roads but rather the refers to unauthorized routes and trails.

11(522)

Comment: Alternatives B, C, and D provide access into the NCA and wilderness through a trailhead and gravel parking lot located in Hidden Valley. It would be helpful to describe more specifics on the process law enforcement and rangers would use to patrol and issue permits for entering the wilderness and Sloan Canyon itself.

Response: The hiring and use of both Law Enforcement and Wilderness Rangers (non-law enforcement) is an administrative action not requiring a decision through this WMP. Wilderness Rangers are the first line contact with wilderness and backcountry users; and are responsible for monitoring for a variety of potential unauthorized incursions into the Wilderness. All regulations would be enforced by BLM Law Enforcement Agents and Law Enforcement Rangers. Violators would be detected through periodic patrol and investigative follow-up to reports by the public, BLM and other agency employees.

11(537)

Comment: On pages 2-20 and 3-50, the draft RMP/EIS refers to and agrees with managing bighorn sheep in 'L,;accordance with the Bureau's Rangewide Plan for Managing Habitat of Desert Bighorn Sheep on Public Lands (I 986). Pages 18 and 19 of the Rangewide Plan contain 15 management practices and standards that need application in the NCA. The first standard establishes that "Crucial areas, such as lambing grounds, migration routes, mineral licks, and areas within 1 mile of permanent water sources, would receive maximum habitat protection." The ninth standard states, "Excessive use by recreationists will be regulated on major desert bighorn use areas." Perhaps our greatest concern for the future of wildlife, particularly species intolerant of human activities otherwise considered benign, is the development of trails in the NCA. Currently, public use on the northern portion of the NCA is limited to cross-county hiking up washes and ridges in an east-west direction. North-south movement within the center of this area has been very limited. The development of trails stands to vastly increase the nature

and volume of public uses into the NCA's core. Department biologists identified that the proposed V4-mile trail buffer around the North McCullough #1 (aka Poppy) Wildlife Water Development is not ideal, but due to this water's proximity to Sloan Canyon, this is a reasonable compromise. Close attention to monitoring will be needed. The draft RMP/EIS should address the possibility of increasing buffer size if public use increases to a level resulting in displacement of wildlife relying on the water development. Buffer protection should also be expanded around the North McCullough #4 Wildlife Water Development (aka Penny) on the northeast side of the range inside of the NCA. While we believe that "wildcat" trails will be dealt with properly in the NCA, we also hold that trail users will continually push the envelope in unauthorized trail extensions, regardless of the enforcement effort. Having public use trails in close proximity to any wildlife water development is inviting problems for wildlife. For example, wildlife trails become more prominent around watering areas; hikers and mountain bikers in the Las Vegas area have already been noted for usurping these trails for their own purposes to the detriment of wildlife. In consideration of trails, the draft RMP/EIS cited that Papouchis et al (2001) showed mountain biking to be less disturbing than hiking to desert bighorn sheep at Canyonlands National Park. Interestingly in the River Mountains, adjacent to the McCullough Mountains, initial data from the USGS study presently underway and longer-term observations by the Department, show areas previously well-used by bighorn are now largely being avoided with the advent of hiking and biking trails. While the River Mountain bighorn have been feted for their unusual habituation to human development (Hemenway Wash & Park, Boulder City), the increase in trails and human use into other portions of bighorn habitat has had a noticeable, concerning behavioral effect on the herd. Trail users throughout the Las Vegas Valley have demonstrated continual disregard for regulations and land use plans by constructing unauthorized trails on Bureau lands. In the Red Rock Canyon NCA, the Bureau has been somewhat culpable by post facto authorization of these trails (Cottonwood Valley, Twilight Zone) that were constructed without appropriate thought and planning. Other unauthorized trails such as those in the North McCullough, South McCullough WSA, and River Mountains Bighorn Sheep ACEC have been condoned by a lack of regulatory enforcement. Therefore, the Semi-Primitive Area on the east side of the NCA, as shown in Figure 2.17, should be extended north one to two miles. The area for mountain bike trails shown on Figure 2.20 should be terminated west of "Rattlesnake Road" to protect the bighorn sheep summer use area around the North McCullough #4 Wildlife Water Development and use of the upper bajada area by gila monster and phainopepla. As the Department has previously asserted in planning discussions, trails must not be allowed along the crest of the North McCullough Range and in the vicinity of the North McCullough #3 (aka Roy) Wildlife Water Development which is located on Boulder City land immediately adjacent to the NCA.

Response: Additional trails would be planned, designed, and constructed through a systematic process that would evaluate needs, potential uses, suitable destinations, and public interest, through an environmental assessment. Trails would not be constructed within ¼ mile of wildlife water developments and trail development in sensitive natural or cultural areas would be avoided if possible. Any unauthorized constructed and social trail would be evaluated and considered whether to close and restore or adopt into the trail system. Any unauthorized surface disturbance would be treated as a trespass and subject to appropriate administrative or law enforcement action.

11(538)

Comment: We also would discourage competitive biking events within the NCA. This activity would be incompatible with the National Conservation Area purpose.

Response: Special Recreation Permits for competitive events could be issued outside the Wilderness at the discretion of the BLM Authorizing Officer.

11(540)

Comment: Page 4-8, To Recreation from Wildlife Management: It is a misnomer to suggest that recreation restrictions due to wildlife management actions will result in increased wildlife populations. It

is also unclear how increased wildlife viewing opportunities impact recreation as wildlife viewing itself is recreation. The hard truth is that NCA use by most wildlife species is likely at capacity. Some of the recreational developments may have minor or negligible negative effects on certain wildlife, but most human recreation activities will disturb or displace wildlife and that poses physiological stresses that are not readily apparent, but critical to long-term health of wildlife populations.

Response: The document has been modified to strike reference to improved wildlife populations.

11(544)

Comment: Hunting is a valid recreational pursuit in the NCA, yet was not mentioned as such. Small game (dove, quail, and rabbit) hunting formerly prevailed on adjacent undeveloped Henderson lands that have since experienced urban conversion. Some upland hunting opportunity still occurs on the NCA. Presently, most hunting activity relates to the desert bighorn sheep season that occurs in the fall. Some concern was voiced at the NCA Draft Plan public meeting in Henderson about hunting in the NCA. Considering the low number of bighorn sheep permits, the low-impact and specialized nature in hunting this species, and current state and local regulations, the Department does not find that any further restrictions are needed.

Response: The proposed plan allows hunting activities, in conformance with State of Nevada laws and regulation (section 2.4.2). Please note that the Sloan Canyon NCA Act, section 605 (f) states that the designation of the NCA does not affect the jurisdiction of the State with respect to wildlife, including hunting, although the Secretary can establish periods and areas in which no hunting is allowed for public safety or administrative reasons.

11(548)

Comment: Stated previously in the draft RMP/EIS, only horses, mules, and burros were named as the only animals allowed for transporting people or their possessions in the NCA. We concur, the allowance of other animals such as llamas and goats pose a real disease risk to bighorn sheep.

Response: The proposed plan also contains this management guidance.

11(549)

Comment: Page 3-34, section 3.13.1 relevant to bighorn sheep hunting: The paragraph as stated is not accurate. True, the number of permits for Hunt Unit 263 (McCullough Mountains and Highland Range) has been low in the past, herd dynamics allowed permit numbers to increase to 6 for the 2004-05 season and 10 for the upcoming 2005-06 season. Throughout Nevada, bighorn sheep hunt quotas are examined annually for consistency with management objectives. The Nevada State Wildlife Commission authorizes these hunt quotas in consideration of recommendations from the Department and the respective County Wildlife Advisory Board.

Response: The text has been changed as requested.

11(571)

Comment: Clark County would like to see an OHV trail system established outside of the non-attainment area in the SE corner of the NCA. This system should be a loop and connected to the OHV areas nearby such as the Dry Lake along Hwy 93.

Response: During the public scoping process and discussions with cooperating agencies, numerous possible management actions were raised for BLM consideration. As part of the development of reasonable alternatives, the planning team rigorously explored and objectively evaluated all the suggested actions. In general, actions were eliminated if they did not comply with the purpose and intent of the Sloan Canyon NCA Act and other laws, regulations, and policy. Much of the northern and western portion of the NCA lies within the Clark County Air Quality Nonattainment area for particulate matter (PM₁₀). Additional OHV trail systems and “play” areas were not considered because the purpose of Sloan Canyon NCA, as directed by Congress in the Sloan Canyon NCA Act, Subsection 602, is “to

conserve, protect, and enhance for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations the cultural, archaeological, natural, wilderness, scientific, geological, historical, biological, wildlife, educational, and scenic resources of the Conservation Area.” Subsection 605(c) of the Act states that the Secretary of the Interior is to “allow only such uses of the Conservation Area that the Secretary determines would further the purpose described under subsection 602” (above). The proposed management plan seeks to provide recreational opportunities that are consistent with the directives provided by the Act.

12.0 REGULATORY AND POLICY ISSUES

12(SCR11)

Summary Comment: Some commenters felt that BLM should not collect recreational use fees and that if fees were collected they should be reasonably priced. Some commenters indicated that the plan was not clear about a user fee system and that fees that may be collected at the NCA should only be used for the NCA.

Summary Response: Use fees could be charged in specific areas of the NCA. Specific fee guidelines and amounts would be determined at a later time, consistent with nearby State and federal facilities. In addition, under Title VIII of The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act, BLM is authorized to collect Standard Amenity Recreation fees and to retain all or part of the fees at the site where they were collected. BLM can collect fees for access to specific areas such as visitor centers and for areas that may include amenities such as parking, toilets, trash collection, picnic tables, signs, and security. The fees are usually used for projects to improve visitor services, protect cultural and natural resources, address health and safety issues, provide maintenance, and to cover the cost of trash collection.

12(78)

Comment: This is a beautiful valley because there is no sprawling growth up the sides of the surrounding mountains. If that growth were to occur we would soon be a small Los Angeles, with sprawling development, pollution and crime. I fear prohibiting the people access to this area would cause the land to be classified as unused, which could support a developer argument to release the lands for auction and then development.

Response: The Sloan Canyon NCA was designated by Congress to preserve, protect, and enhance the area’s cultural features and natural resources and wilderness values for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations. The lands within the NCA boundary can not be auctioned for development.

12(81)

Comment: This is a beautiful valley because there is no sprawling growth up the sides of the surrounding mountains. If that growth were to occur we would soon be a small Los Angeles, with sprawling development, pollution and crime. I fear prohibiting the people access to this area would cause the land to be classified as unused, which could support a developer argument to release the lands for auction and then development.

Response: The Sloan Canyon NCA was designated by Congress to preserve, protect, and enhance the area’s cultural features and natural resources and wilderness values for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations. The lands within the NCA boundary can not be auctioned for development.

12(227)

Comment: What are the projected O&M costs for the different alternatives that are being brought up? You had 66 million dollars. How long do you expect that to go or how far do you expect it to go if you start building buildings or putting roads in that need to be maintained, and where's the funding going to come for that?

Response: The Sloan Canyon NCA Act and the Clark County Act, Title II ("Wilderness Areas"), set a number of ground rules for the development of a management plan for the NCA and Wilderness. One of the rules pertains to NCA funding sources. The selling of nearby public land would fund the conservation and management of the NCA, including the construction of facilities and research of archeological and geological resources.

12(569)

Comment: One thing I did in researching this, and I don't know how I missed that it's been going on for two years, I don't know if BLM didn't have very good marketing about this or informed residents, but this has kind of been brought on me in the last couple of months.

Response: Chapter 5 of the proposed plan describes the planning process and the multiple opportunities for public involvement. Included in this chapter is a discussion of the methods that were used to disseminate planning information to the public.

13.0 TRANSPORTATION**13(SCR43)**

Summary Comment: Commenters noted that it will be difficult to ban vehicles from the NCA and that the EIS should recognize that simply posting passive prohibitive BLM signage is totally inadequate. It was suggested that immediate physical blockage to motorized vehicles is essential to eliminate the unhealthy aspects of dumped trash, construction and landscaping materials. The RMP/EIS should clearly identify which roads/trails entering the NCA that the BLM will permanently close to include "how" and "when".

Summary Response: As noted in section 2.4.10 of the PRMP, the North McCullough Road, Dutchman Pass Road, Quo Vadis Mine Road, and Rattlesnake Canyon Road would be open to the public for registered vehicles as shown in Figure 2.12, Sloan Canyon Roads—Registered Motorized Vehicles Map. All other roads and routes would be closed to the public for registered vehicle use. All roads and routes not designated for public use could be physically barricaded, signed, or restored to natural conditions, as appropriate. Road and route closure activities have already been implemented under NCA interim management and these closure effort would continue.

13(41)

Comment: Access by vehicle to possible "trail heads" should not be forbidden; but should be guided by an acceptable choice of approved approaches to such "trail heads".

Response: Section 2.3.8 of the proposed plan describes the proposed facilities as well as the open roads within the NCA.

13(45)

Comment: The BLM Draft Resource Management Plan cause us serious concern [because] hiking on the east side of the McCullough range would be permitted, but driving on any dirt roads (including power line roads) in the NCA to access the east side would be prohibited.

Response: The Sloan Canyon Act requires BLM to designate roads and trails for the use of motorized vehicles, (section 605, (d)). After considering public comments from scoping and on the Draft RMP/EIS, discussions with cooperating agencies, and in consideration of the purpose of the NCA, the roads

described in section 2.4.10 of the proposed plan are designated open for registered motorized vehicle use. Several roads located on the east side of the NCA are designated open. In addition, the utility road that parallels the eastern boundary of the NCA provides access from the east.

13(49)

Comment: The BLM Draft Resource Management Plan cause us serious concern [because] hiking on the east side of the McCullough range would be permitted, but driving on any dirt roads (including power line roads) in the NCA to access the east side would be prohibited.

Response: The Sloan Canyon Act requires BLM to designate roads and trails for the use of motorized vehicles, (section 605, (d)). After considering public comments from scoping and on the Draft RMP/EIS, discussions with cooperating agencies, and in consideration of the purpose of the NCA, the roads described in section 2.3.10 of the proposed plan are designated open for registered motorized vehicle use. Several roads located on the east side of the NCA are designated open. In addition, the utility road that parallels the eastern boundary of the NCA provides access from the east.

13(232)

Comment: I think it's unfair to close the existing roads to disabled vets and current members of the Armed forces, as well as the American OHV public.

Response: The Sloan Canyon Act requires BLM to designate roads and trails for the use of motorized vehicles, (section 605, (d)). After considering public comments from scoping and on the Draft RMP/EIS, discussions with cooperating agencies, and in consideration of the purpose of the NCA, the roads described in section 2.4.10 of the proposed plan are designated open for registered motorized vehicle use. Several roads located on the east side of the NCA are designated open. In addition, the utility road that parallels the eastern boundary of the NCA provides access from the east.

13(233)

Comment: I think for the plan to have a road system to maybe get to the petroglyphs, something like Red Rock, something where it is feed, it is policed.

Response: The Sloan Canyon Petroglyph Site is located inside the North McCullough Wilderness, where motorized vehicles are prohibited.

13(281)

Comment: The desert's actually in better shape now than it was before. When you start – what this will wind up doing, this will close off all the roads to travel. And you have an inalienable right to travel. Governments are established to secure your inalienable rights, blessings of liberty. It's all in the constitution. He says they have to follow the law, just ignore the main law they're supposed to be following. People have an inalienable right to travel.

Response: The Sloan Canyon Act requires BLM to designate roads and trails for the use of motorized vehicles, (section 605, (d)). After considering public comments from scoping and on the Draft RMP/EIS, discussions with cooperating agencies, and in consideration of the purpose of the NCA, the roads described in section 2.4.10 of the proposed plan are designated open for registered motorized vehicle use. Several roads located on the east side of the NCA are designated open. In addition, the utility road that parallels the eastern boundary of the NCA provides access from the east.

13(283)

Comment: But they need to -- they need to leave the land, and the roads have to be left open. Any road already there has to be left open. You start closing off roads, you're not establishing or securing people's inalienable right to travel. That's my comment.

Response: The Sloan Canyon Act requires BLM to designate roads and trails for the use of motorized vehicles, (section 605, (d)). After considering public comments from scoping and on the Draft RMP/EIS, discussions with cooperating agencies, and in consideration of the purpose of the NCA, the roads described in section 2.4.10 of the proposed plan are designated open for registered motorized vehicle use. Several roads located on the east side of the NCA are designated open. In addition, the utility road that parallels the eastern boundary of the NCA provides access from the east.

13(285)

Comment: We're terribly concerned about the access issues that affect our community. As you go through the process of determining how you're going to access these particular Sloan Canyon areas, we want to particularly caution you on the fact that Eastern, the Sun City Anthem loop as we call it, are areas that, frankly, we can't stand any more cars in. We already are overcrowded in that area. We recommend you look at accessing that from the Sloan connector, which is off the I-15, down to Democracy and then, perhaps, through a separate road in there. That will provide a good experience for those people versus a bad experience traveling with a bunch of older folks.

Response: Sloan Canyon is a national conservation area must be accessible to all who chose to visit the area. BLM is working closely with the City of Henderson to identify access routes as residential development continues to expand towards the NCA boundary. The alignment of the North McCullough Road ROW, was proposed by the City of Henderson in its ROW application to BLM.

13(436)

Comment: I think it is advisable that an agreement be reached with wildlife people not to use motor access for maintenance of the guzzler located west of the Rattlesnake Road end, even though access for this purpose is authorized by the Sloan Canyon NCA Act. Similar motor access to the Sutor Hills guzzler has been declared unnecessary by wildlife people and I think the same philosophy should apply here. Roads or motor trails attract users of all kinds, a situation I think is not suited to good wildlife management. But even if motorized access is utilized infrequently for maintenance, such a trail needs to be obscure and not open to the public so that it remains most compatible with Semi-Primitive Zoning.

Response: Based on comments received on the Draft RMP/EIS, NDOW is also concerned about increased use near wildlife guzzlers. BLM and NDOW would work closely to monitor and minimize impacts from recreation use.

13(503)

Comment: BLM does not provide specific information about the impacts associated with designating Hidden Valley Road, Dutchman Pass Road, Quo Vadis Mine Road, and Rattlesnake Canyon Road.

Response: The impacts of these roads on the NCA's resources are discussed in Section 4.10 of the proposed plan.

13(541)

Comment: Rattlesnake Road on the northeast side of the NCA was less than half its current length for many years. It was extended by a mining interest in the early 1990's and abandoned without reclamation. The Department recommends that the road's western half be reclaimed to a width to accommodate mountain bikes. We also request that this not be designated as a trailhead in the future. Establishing a trailhead would likely entice trail extensions directed to the south. Again, any trails in the vicinity of "Rattlesnake Road" should avoid the hills to the northwest and west.

Response: In the proposed plan, the mountain biking and equestrian use areas near the Rattlesnake road have been modified as discussed with NDOW. This change should provide increased protection for the natural resources in this area.

14.0 VEGETATION

14(SCR34)

Summary Comment: Commenters requested that casual collection of vegetation in the NCA be prohibited and that collection only be allowed by permit.

Summary Response: The proposed management plan has been modified to prohibit casual and commercial collection of vegetation, such as seeds and live plants, in the Sloan Canyon NCA.

14(SCR35)

Summary Comment: Commenters noted the problem of noxious weeds in the NCA. Commenters suggested using native plant species in treatment of disturbed areas.

Summary Response: Noxious weeds are a concern throughout the western states and a noxious weed program is provided in the proposed plan. Section 2.4.11 contains vegetation management goals and actions and the goals of the Partners Against Weeds – an Action Plan for BLM are specifically mentioned. Additional management direction is given in Appendix C, the Wilderness Plan, for rehabilitating disturbances within the Wilderness.

14(557)

Comment: Appendix H - Biological Management Strategy. As presented, the Department believes the scientific and applied management merits of the Biological Management Strategy need to be expanded. Proposed investigations should clearly state goals, objectives, and methodologies supportive of how findings will identify: baseline conditions in timely fashion, impacts to the baseline conditions, cause and effect relationships, and remedial or proactive measures to be implemented if needed. The consequences to biological and wildlife populations by urban interface are largely predictable and hinted at in this appendix and elsewhere in the draft RMP/EIS. We agree that wildlife educational opportunities for the public are important and integral to the NCA's wildlife program, but that does not solve all conservation challenges affronting the NCA. Study descriptions identifying efforts to fill gaps about basic life history and habitat associations of certain special status species are lacking. The Biological Management Strategy does not provide a framework for acquiring and managing information necessary to evaluate effectiveness of protections envisioned with NCA establishment and administration. Nor does it suggest monitoring strategies identifying thresholds that trigger timely changes in existing NCA management practices, expediting implementation of adaptive contingencies, or measuring the efficacy of such actions. With assistance by other federal, state and interested entities, we look forward to development of a much improved product.

Response: The Biological Management Strategy is meant to be a high-level, initial strategy for managing the biological resources within the NCA. More detailed management strategies will be developed in the future based on visitation and monitoring.

15.0 WILDERNESS

15(SCR36)

Summary Comment: Commenters indicated that solitude and wilderness soundscapes would be affected and impacted by aircraft overflights.

Summary Response: BLM does not have administrative jurisdiction of the airspace above the Sloan Canyon NCA and the Wilderness. The use of aircraft is only regulated by BLM if the aircraft lands or if anything/anyone is picked up for dropped off by means of an aircraft. Aircraft flights over the NCA are infrequent and are usually at high elevations. The Clark County Act specifically allows military overflights of the Wilderness. Flight testing and evaluation; designation or creation of new units of special use airspace; or establishment of training routes are not precluded. The highest percentage of low-level overflights of the Wilderness is from scenic tours originating from local area airports, although private flights from Henderson Executive Airport, located several miles from the northern Wilderness boundary, also contribute. In addition, commercial flights from McCarran International Airport pass directly over the Wilderness, although they tend to be localized to the western edge and at an altitude of more than 4,000 feet. Legislation currently before Congress, proposes a future heliport located west of the NCA and mandates a two mile wide helicopter flight corridor over the Wilderness. The legislation would allow helicopter flights over the Wilderness at elevations between 500 and 1,000 feet above ground. As proposed, approximately 90 round-trip overflights a day, equating to a flight about every four minutes could emanate from the heliport. These overflights may impact wilderness values and visitor experiences in portions of the North McCullough Wilderness, but are outside the scope of BLM's planning or authority. Overflights conducted by BLM within the NCA or the Wilderness would be designed to minimize impacts to NCA or the Wilderness characteristics. These overflights would be primarily for NCA or wilderness monitoring purposes, (e.g. checking for new disturbances, A vehicle use); however, helicopters could be used to deliver personnel or materials for the purposes of the NCA in conformance with the Sloan Canyon Act, Wilderness Act, and North McCullough Wilderness Management Plan (Appendix C).

15(63)

Comment: I live approx. 1/2 block from an entry into Sloan Canyon. I have a Yamaha "Rhino" 2 seated vehicle I drive into the canyon and pick up debris others leave behind. I am disabled and cannot walk through the area in its entirety. Is a permit available for me?

Response: Section 4.10 of the proposed plan presents the roads that would be open for registered vehicle use.

15(558)

Comment: Appendix I - Draft Wilderness Management Plan. Of the wilderness designated in the Act of 2002, only the Wee Thump Wilderness Area lacks significant habitat value for bighorn sheep. All of the North McCullough Mountains Wilderness Area is habitat for desert bighorn sheep. The North McCullough Wilderness Area was not recommended for wilderness by the Bureau. The area has significant shortcomings because of its size and proximity to urban intrusions. This should dictate a conservative approach to the development of trails, facilities, and related appurtenances. The Department is very concerned about trails in the NCA, but particularly in the wilderness. Constructing trails would increase human use into remote areas, impacting use of those tracts by wildlife. The location of the trails is also critical. Ridgeline or crestline trails would make visitors more visible to wildlife, influencing their use of the area. To protect the interests of wildlife it would be necessary for the Department to be involved in the trails planning process. On page 1-8, a passage states that No motorized access to the wildlife water (Project #4916) would be permitted. This language is prematurely presented and is not consistent with our Wilderness MOU, the Act of 2002, or the Wilderness Act. While inspections and light repairs can be carried out on the ground, we believe major repairs will require at the least, helicopter access. A minimum tool evaluation is appropriate, and allowance of motorized access may be acceptable. We do recommend that wilderness use remain primitive until appropriate baseline monitoring has been accomplished.

Response: The North McCullough Wilderness Plan has been finalized in Appendix C and addresses the commenter's concerns.

16.0 WILDLIFE

16(SCR37)

Summary Comment: Commenters requested that bighorn sheep lambing seasons and areas in the NCA be identified to help to avoid human intrusions.

Summary Response: The Nevada Department of Wildlife is a cooperating agency for the proposed plan and provided expertise to ensure that sufficient safeguards were incorporated in the proposed plan. These safeguards included ways to identify sensitive areas on a dynamic basis as they might change over time and ways to respond with appropriate measures to reduce potential impacts.

16(SCR38)

Summary Comment: Commenters requested that reptile collections be prohibited in the NCA, because collection negatively affect species.

Summary Response: The proposed management plan has been modified to prohibit casual and commercial collection of reptiles in the Sloan Canyon NCA.

16(111)

Comment: While field mice are to be expected adjacent to open desert areas, rats should not be tolerated. I've killed two in the last year which I suspect have been attracted by the "nesting" materials which have been dumped in the Flood-Control Catchment basin.

Response: The proposed plan includes removal of existing litter within the NCA. This should result in reducing the attractiveness of the area to rats or other non-native wildlife species.

16(132)

Comment: Several traditional areas of terrain within the NCA and north McCullough wilderness boundaries are utilized by the ewes for lambing. These areas are limited in numbers and are particularly critical for the success of lamb production and survival. The ewes will seldom lamb in these areas being disturbed by human activities. Physical characteristics for lambing areas are: 1. Water sources such as springs, potholes, guzzlers-ample for the needs of the ewes 2. And adequate food supply with seasonal green grasses and forbs which provides a higher food value and enriched milk supply 3. Rough, high, broken ground with ample escape cover 4. Terrain offering protection from inclement weather and possible predators. Resolve***Wildlife biologist of BLM and NDOW "identify" those areas of the NCA being used by the desert bighorn ewes during the lambing period of late winter and early spring. Further more - restrict intrusion into these identified areas by visitors or land users for the duration of this lambing period.

Response: The preferred alternative (Alternative C) would limit the designation and construction of trails, facilities, and ROWs within known bighorn sheep lambing areas. Surface disturbing activities would be limited within known bighorn sheep lambing areas from January through May.

16(133)

Comment: Desert bighorn are considered as a non-migratory when established in preset day ranges. However there is periodic movement of the bighorn within their home mountain ranges. Seasonal rains of early spring and the Southwest's monsoons of July and August provide moisture for plant growth responses that are critical to maintaining a healthy-sustaining population of desert bighorn. These induced are generally limited in size to one or two hillsides or valley floors along a range. Although desert bighorn are opportunistic and adaptable feeders-these seasonal green-ups produce grasses, wildflowers, and new growth of browes that are preferences. Seasonal habitat improvements that provides an opportunity for the desert bighorn to thrive in an otherwise dry and harsh environmental landscape. Resolve *** Establish

criteria within NCA regulations-with advisement from wildlife biologist of the BLM and NDOW - regulate or restrict access to seasonal green-up areas if visitor intrusion inhibits the beneficial usage for the welfare of wildlife**Administering of the said regulations would assure the NCA and the public of the future of our wildlife legacy.

Response: Desert bighorn sheep habitat and populations within the NCA are managed in cooperation with the current NDOW Memorandum of Understanding. This includes educating visitors to be sensitive to bighorn sheep lambing areas and limit designation and construction of trails, facilities and ROWs in known lambing areas.

16(134)

Comment: Within the boundaries of the North McCullough Wilderness area there are several locations where Nevada's desert bighorn sheep exist. Although the sheep are not limited by any given range-their existence is predicated by seasonal rain water and growth responses "and" a sustained free water source. The Fraternity-working with the BLM and NDOW have established two water development projects, called guzzlers, within th NCA/MWA and one close to the NCA's southeast border. Resolve**Establish that no trailheads will end at the said project water sources and trail routes in close proximity to guzzlers shall be "out of visual sighting"*** Intrusion of the public to these critical water projects would lead to a diminishing desert bighorn sheep population and will lessen the ability of those visiting the NCA to view these magnificent animals in their natural habitat.

Response: Desert bighorn sheep habitat and populations within the NCA are managed in cooperation with the current NDOW Memorandum of Understanding. This includes educating visitors to be sensitive to bighorn sheep lambing areas and limit designation and construction of trails, facilities and ROWs in known lambing areas.

16(238)

Comment: For those of you who are hikers, I want you to see the top of the mountain. There's no way I don't want you see a desert bighorn sheep. But if we don't approach this realistically, that may be a place where you can hike, bike, ride your off-road vehicles, but it will not be a place for wildlife. And I don't want to see that happen. I know you don't either.

Response: Thank you for your comment.

16(242)

Comment: I notice that in terms of some of the restrictions for having to do with raptor nesting, it talks about an April/May time frame for restricting the public into various raptor nesting areas. Things like great horned owls are also raptors. They start nesting in January, very early. So your window of care or concern for raptors probably needs to be expanded. The raptor management action has been changed to be sensitive to raptors during nesting season, rather than stating a few specific months.

Response: As additional information about sensitive resources, including all raptor species is collected from monitoring efforts, adaptive management would be used to protect and preserve these resources for future generations.

16(243)

Comment: The mere presence of people can have an impact on them [big horn sheep] and basically cause them to move away. So I would be very cautious in terms of the plan, and you can always loosen restrictions. It's very difficult to tighten them oftentimes, because constituencies are built up for whatever it is.

Response: The preferred alternative (Alternative C) would limit the designation and construction of trails, facilities, and ROWs within known bighorn sheep lambing areas. Surface disturbing activities would be limited within known bighorn sheep lambing areas from January through May.

16(251)

Comment: We live in this country just like they [bighorn sheep] do. And maybe we don't walk everywhere like they do, but we still have the right to be out there like they do.

Response: Thank you for your comment.

16(269)

Comment: They talk about how well the bighorn sheep is doing. Well, maybe it's the interaction of the people and nature unrestricted that help make it that way.

Response: Thank you for your comment.

16(274)

Comment: Bighorn sheep, the animals, those are protected by the people in Henderson and by the people that enjoy everything that's available out there. And to restrict those things and just prohibit various things is ridiculous. You should be able to incorporate it.

Response: Thank you for your comment.

16(406)

Comment: In Table 3.6 the bird section lists several special status species which at best would be considered accidental if found in the NCA since there is no suitable habitat where one would expect to find these birds. The implication that specific management actions relating to Northern Goshawk (a forest hawk), Pinyon Jays, Juniper Titmouse, or Arizona Bell's Vireo will be occurring is misleading. These birds should be dropped from the list. Also on page 3-40 Townsend's big eared bat is listed in the bird section. If it is going to be included it should be listed along with other mammals.

Response: The list of special status species for the NCA used species data that is aggregated at the county level. This data source includes species whose habitat is not present within the NCA. Townsend's big eared bat is included with the other mammals listed in Table 3.6.

16(545)

Comment: Page 2-79, Section 2.8.12: The second to the last paragraph reads as if the Bureau will issue permits for collection of wildlife specimens for scientific purposes, and NDOW only needs to authorize collection of listed species. As stated, this is not an accurate reflection of regulatory authorities by the affected agencies, including the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. The Department will be happy to assist in clarifying this and other similarly reading sections.

Response: Permits for collection of wildlife specimen within the NCA would be issued for scientific purposes on a case-by-case basis only. Casual and commercial collection of unlisted wildlife species would not be allowed within the NCA and collection of any listed species would require additional permits from NDOW and US Fish and Wildlife Service.

16(547)

Comment: In section 3.13 on page 3-34 and in the Impacts section (4.12), the draft RMP/EIS mistakenly states that there are no known amphibians in the NCA, while they are mentioned in Appendix H on page H-2. Redspotted toads (*Bufo punctatus*) are known to occur in the drainage below the Penny Water Development. In August of 1988, toads were found using the temporary pools in that area immediately following a thundershower. Following construction of the Penny water development, the toads have regularly used the water development's drinker. The toads existed prior to water development installation and it is suspected that the species' presence can be found in similar volcanic tuff drainages to the north and south on the east face.

Response: The past presence of red spotted toads (*Bufo punctatus*) near the Penny water development after thunderstorms has been included in Section 3.13 and in Appendix H.

16(550)

Comment: Page 3-35, top paragraph, Reptile Collecting: Credit for the information in this paragraph should be to the action agency, i.e. NDOW 2002; not to Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (NNDRC 2002). Further, the type of citation is unclear as there is no reference listed in the back of Chapter 3 or elsewhere in the draft RMP/EIS. The Department is unclear what the cited NDOW reference is; hence we are uncertain as to the accuracy and context of the statement made in the second sentence. The 1998 Record of Decision for the Bureau's Approved Las Vegas Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement at the bottom of page 5 states, Management Directions SS-3-a-n would change as follows: Do not allow commercial collection of flora. Only allow commercial collection of wildlife upon completion of either a credible study or investigation that demonstrates that commercial collection does not adversely impact affected species or their habitat, as determined by NDOW. This action will not affect hunting, trapping, or casual collection as permitted by the State. The Department hopes the Bureau will keep this in mind in consideration of enhanced access considerations associated with other potential NCA uses.

Response: The Nevada Natural Resources Status Report by the Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources has been included in the text as the correct reference regarding collection of reptiles. The Nevada Natural Resources Status Report was prepared by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources as part of the agency's ongoing process to develop a Natural Resources Plan. Casual and commercial collection of reptiles and vegetation would be prohibited throughout the NCA.

16(551)

Comment: Page 3-35, section 3.13.2, Potential Wildlife Species. The species listed are examples of known or potential species and does not constitute an accurate, comprehensive list. In effect, this section should make this statement and refer to an appendix, if warranted, and provide the comprehensive list and other relevant information there. The Department will be happy to assist in enhanced species list development. For example, Mammals and Table 3.6. The Mexican free-tailed bat is also now State Protected. Other bat species which may occur in the NCA are the pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*) (State Protected) and the State Sensitive Townsend's big-eared bat (*Plecotus townsendii*). The listing name of long-haired myotis should be long-eared myotis. The grey fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*) is not listed here, but is in Appendix H. This species rivals or is probably more common than the kit fox in the NCA. The mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus hemionus*) occurs in the South McCullough Mountains, but has not been documented north of McCullough Pass. Palmer's chipmunk (*Tamias palmeri*) is not expected to occur in the low desert, treeless setting of the NCA. Table 3.6, neither the desert valley kangaroo mouse (*Microdipodops megacephalus albiventer*) nor the pygmy rabbit (*Brachylagus idahoensis*) are known to occur in the NCA. The Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*) is now a State Protected, Sensitive bird. Page 3-36, Reptiles, corrections of scientific names: Great Basin Collared Lizard (*Crotaphytus bicinctores*), Speckled Rattlesnake (*Crotalus mitchellii*); compare with Table 3.6 and Appendix H.

Response: The list of Potential Wildlife Species in Section 3.13.2 is a preliminary list of those species that may be found within the NCA. This list includes species that may occur in areas near the NCA or past survey data indicated their presence within the NCA. A comprehensive list of species for the NCA will need to be developed in cooperation with NDOW. The status species and species scientific names have been updated to reflect the updated information available from the Nevada Natural Heritage database.

16(552)

Comment: Pages 3-38 to 3-54 inclusive of section Table 3.6 Fauna Special Status Species Potentially Occurring LiB the Sloan Canyon NCA, and section 3.13.4 Bighorn Potential Habitat Model, we use the desert bighorn sheep as an example: Habitat characteristics reflected in Table 3.6 should include, "lower

elevation areas with moderate slopes and ruggedness" that bighorn sheep rely on during fall, winter and spring months. The bighorn sheep habitat model developed in conjunction with the USGS is a useful tool. As with all predictive habitat models, results generated stem from assumptions and chosen parameters. Inherently, habitat models have weaknesses as they incorporate few principal components of complex systems. Habitat models provide starting points or baselines that must be supported or refuted by empirical data and/or GPS positional data. Section 3.13.4 should provide information that explains the utility and limitations of the habitat models. Moreover, the designation "Crucial" (=Summer) Habitat should be omitted from Figure 3.16. Potential Bighorn Sheep Habitat is misleading not merely because the model has not been validated, but more importantly, portrayal of summer habitat as crucial strongly suggests winter habitat has inferior value; this is not at all the case. All bighorn habitat, regardless of season or description used, is crucial or critical to the species. In the McCullough Range, the Department conducts aerial bighorn sheep surveys in the early fall at a time when reliance on freestanding water remains high. Thus, bighorn distribution in the early fall often closely reflects summer bighorn distribution. Bighorn group locations noted on aerial surveys indicate a much broader distribution in summer than suggested by the bighorn sheep habitat model.

Response: Bighorn sheep habitat is defined as summer range and winter range. Habitat models are based on information that varies in generality and precision, due in part to the amount of available quantitative habitat information and the frequent qualitative nature of existing information. Not all areas where desert bighorn sheep may occur are included in the model, however the model includes areas where they are most likely to occur.

16(554)

Comment: Appendix C - Draft Recreation Monitoring Plan: Monitoring the effects of recreation use on wildlife is addressed as a somewhat nebulous goal. The Department would like to see some form of intensive monitoring similar to the active work by the USGS in the River Mountains. This should be initiated as soon as possible to establish a baseline. Constructing trails and other developments should be limited until a basic understanding of area resources is better understood.

Response: Monitoring resources within the NCA are included as part of the Proposed RMP. This includes monitoring for sensitive wildlife resources as well as cultural resources.

16(555)

Comment: Cumulative Impacts, Section 4.16. This section provides a good start as a qualitative description of where the Sloan Canyon NCA fits in to the cumulative effects occurring in Clark County. However, the cumulative effects upon the NCA are not well listed or quantified. For example, landscape-level species associated with the NCA and the McCullough Wilderness, e.g. bighorn sheep, are affected by several actions occurring adjacent to and away from the NCA. The Ivanpah Energy Center, Copper Mountain Energy project, Sempra gas line, Navajo gas line, Boulder City / US-93 Corridor Project, Hoover Dam Bypass Project, Table Mountain and other wind energy projects, SNWA's Intake and Surface Water Diversion projects, Ash Grove Cement, Coyote Springs Investments, Spring Mountains Perimeter Trail, and River Mountains Trail all have bearing on the health and persistence of Nevada's desert bighorn population. Each of these has direct, indirect and cumulative effects inherent to them. Yet, the cumulative impacts for these projects have not been entered into the discussion formula for the Sloan Canyon NCA. Nor have measures to minimize or mitigate been adequately addressed. An example of this is in the Wildlife section on pages 4-135 and -136. The impacts discussed are mainly direct and indirect impacts within the NCA, not cumulative. Substantive treatment of cumulative effects and mitigation for impacts has yet to be adequately developed. Hopefully, the statements in section 4.18 are not harbingers to the final RMP/EIS.

Response: The cumulative impacts to the NCA and wildlife have been revised.

16(572)

Comment: Clark County requests that the BLM include any invertebrate species of concern potentially such as the Nevada admiral (*Limenitis weidemeyerii nevadae*).

Response: Invertebrates have not been listed in the PRMP, however, BLM is mandated to protect and manage Threatened, Endangered, Candidate, Proposed, and BLM Sensitive wildlife species and their habitat. BLM is also required to protect and manage Sensitive species jointly identified with the appropriate State agency. Table 3.6, Fauna Special Status Species Potentially Occurring in Sloan Canyon NCA, presents the lists of species that could occur within the NCA that are either federally protected, BLM Sensitive species, part of the NNHP, or included in the Clark County MSHCP (CCDCP 2000). The species listed in Table 3.6 are based on county-level information and existing survey data, and do not contain all species that could be in the NCA. Ongoing and future wildlife studies would refine the list of species occurring within the NCA, which would be updated to include invertebrates.

17.0 OUTSIDE OF SCOPE**17(131)**

Comment: The Nevada Outdoor Recreation Association believes the draft EIS to be fundamentally flawed because two emerging proposed actions (the construction of the scenic road and two nearby airports) have not been adequately considered in this EIS. The transportation projects will affect sound levels in the NCA and affect the visitor experience. Wildlife present in the area can also be impacted. We ask that the impacts from these proposed projects be more fully evaluated and that mitigation measures be considered.

Response: The City of Henderson holds ROWs for two roads and two trails. The ROW for the existing road is for access to a flood control facility, and two new trail ROWs were granted as part of the Sloan Canyon NCA Act. The Sloan Canyon NCA Act directed BLM to grant the City of Henderson a ROW for the Anthem Trail (N-76312) and the North McCullough Road and Trail (BLM Case File No. N-65874). In September 2002, the City of Henderson submitted an application to construct a trail and scenic roadway through the area now designated as the Sloan Canyon NCA (ROW N-65874). The Sloan Canyon NCA Act required BLM to grant the ROW to the City of Henderson within 180 days of NCA designation and to make a recommendation for the road, unofficially named the North McCullough Road, in the NCA management plan. In May 2003, BLM partially issued the ROW, recognizing that the recommendation for the road location would be developed as part of this RMP process. Once the recommendation is finalized through the ROD, the City of Henderson would Identify a specific alignment and amend ROW application N-65874 to include road design details and visitor facilities, such as parking areas. Additional environmental reviews would be required for this detailed planning. The BLM does not have jurisdiction over the airspace above the North McCullough Wilderness. The use of aircraft is only regulated by the BLM if they land or; if anything or anyone is picked up or dropped by means of an aircraft. Aircraft overflights of the area are currently infrequent and usually at high elevations. However, two new airport development proposals exist that could greatly degrade solitude of the area: 1) a heliport near the northwest corner of the Wilderness would cause sight-seeing helicopter overflights every few minutes; 2) the construction of a cargo/passenger airport between Primm and Jean, Nevada, could cause additional, lower level commercial overflights, depending on takeoff and landing flight paths.

17(302)

Comment: I found that there was a survey done by BLM. What I think they did is 1,500 people randomly chosen from DMV records were sent a questionnaire. The questionnaire didn't ask if you wanted this type of area or if you wanted this type of use to be available in this conservation area. The questionnaire asked how many times have you done this activity in the last year? And it included walking, hiking, biking, motorcycling, quad use, all these things, camping, all this stuff. The questionnaire asked how many times,

and it gave multiple choice answers, 1 to 10, 10 to 20, so on like that. Percentage wise over the State of Nevada, 1,500 people, there were something like 20 percent or 18 percent were people between the ages of 65 and 75 years old. Now, I'm not saying that there's anything wrong with that. I think that's great. What I'm saying is that those same people if they had been asked should we prohibit motorcycle use, well, I have a grandfather who rode motorcycles for 20 years in California before they closed down 90 percent of the areas in California. So I think that it was very, again, short-sighted to ask the survey in that manner. I think there would be a lot more people that would have responded positively. Just because a 65-year-old man hasn't been bike riding 20 times in the last year doesn't mean he thinks a 25-year-old or a 30-year-old shouldn't be allowed to.

Response: This questionnaire is outside the scope of the Sloan Canyon NCA Resource Management Plan. Please contact the BLM Las Vegas Field Office at 515-5000 for information on the questionnaire.

17(308)

Comment: Would it be possible to be on a notification list for NEPA projects affecting the Northeast Clark County area? Particularly Moapa and Virgin Valley's, Lake Mead area and the Gold Butte area. I am concerned of the lack of public participation with the loss of the website. I would also like a copy of the Las Vegas RMP FEIS of 1998, if possible.

Response: Please contact the BLM Las Vegas Field Office at 515-5000 for information on other BLM lands and to request copies of documents.

17(454)

Comment: From another viewpoint, the writers should read Range Magazine (particularly several articles in the Summer 2005 issue) and come into a better realization that over resting federal lands (particularly rangeland) strips away biodiversity. SNRTP's observation concerning activity that allows seeds to sprout and develop is right on!

Response: The Hidden Valley Allotment is the only allotment open to livestock grazing in the Sloan Canyon NCA. Most of the Hidden Valley Allotment is outside the NCA and therefore is not affected by this plan's decisions; however, a portion of the allotment extends north into the NCA and the North McCullough Wilderness (Figure 3.21). Grazing on the Hidden Valley Allotment is ephemeral, which means that authorization to graze is dependent on climatic conditions and grass production. The permittee may graze the allotment if the BLM Authorized Officer determines forage conditions are suitable for livestock grazing. Consequently, BLM is actively involved in the management of the Hidden Valley Allotment.

18.0 PETROGLYPH SITE MANAGEMENT

18(SCR39)

Summary Comment: Commenters stated their support for permits and guided tours of the Sloan Canyon Petroglyph Site.

Summary Response: Once residential development on the western side of the NCA is complete, the Sloan Canyon Petroglyph Site will be just a short distance from a large urban population. To manage the potential high number of visitors, to protect the sensitive cultural and natural resources, and to protect wilderness characteristics, detailed management actions were developed. These actions would be implemented once adequate NCA infrastructure is in place. Section 2.4.3 of the PRMP and Appendix C, the Wilderness Management Plan contains additional information on protections for the Petroglyph Management Area.

18(SCR40)

Summary Comment: The proposed management plan has been modified to prohibit casual and commercial collection of reptiles in the Sloan Canyon NCA.

Summary Response: The proposed plan designates foot trails within and in the vicinity of the Petroglyph Management Area which was designed to minimize impacts on cultural, wildlife, and wilderness values. The trail head at Hidden Valley also provides access to other parts of the NCA and wilderness where cross-country hiking is allowed. In the Wilderness, there would be three trail options: the traditional hike in Sloan Canyon wash (Petroglyph Trail) or a newly constructed trail which forks off the traditional wash hike and avoids the rockfall portion of the wash (Cowboy Trail), and from the south by the Hidden Valley Trail. Access to the Petroglyph Management Area from south end of the canyon would be by permit on low-use days via a designated 1.5-mile trail from the Hidden Valley Trailhead.

18(73)

Comment: With money available, we should make the access to the petroglyphs available for cars and families with a visitor center and protected from abuse.

Response: The preferred alternative proposes a visitor center at the north entrance to the Sloan Canyon Petroglyph site that would allow visitation to the site by guide or permit. However, the rock art sites are situated within the North McCullough Wilderness Area, which based on Wilderness management policy, does not allow motorized access. The permit system would be designed to limit the amount of people that could visit the site at any given time, which would serve to protect these sites from damage.

18(88)

Comment: Their proposal also limits access to the area of the petroglyphs which are perhaps three to four miles to the west. A new development will come fairly close to the petroglyphs and they have proposed restricting access to them only by guided tours and perhaps only approaching them from the south [off Las Vegas Blvs. halfway to Jean].

Response: The preferred alternative proposes a visitor center at the north entrance to the Sloan Canyon Petroglyph site that would allow visitation to the site by permit. The permit system would be designed to limit the amount of people that could visit the site at any given time, which would serve to protect these sites from damage.

19.0 NORTH MCCULLOUGH ROAD**19(SCR32)**

Summary Comment: Commenters stated their support for the northern corridor of the North McCullough Road, because it would be less intrusive to the NCA.

Summary Response: Based on ground surveys, field visits, impact assessments, and extensive dialogue with City of Henderson planners and engineers, as well as cooperating agencies, BLM recommends the proposed Northern Corridor as the location for North McCullough Road.

19(SCR33)

Summary Comment: Commenters suggested that a bike lane be incorporated into the North McCullough Road.

Summary Response: The City of Henderson submitted an application to BLM in September 2002, to construct a trail and scenic roadway to provide rural roadway access to the NCA, trailheads, and parking pullouts/overlook points. In November 2002, the Sloan Canyon NCA Act directed BLM to grant the City of Henderson a ROW for the Anthem Trails (N-76312) and the North McCullough Road and Trail (N-65874). The City of Henderson application for the North McCullough Road and Trail could include

multiple-uses for the trail. A bike lane within the road itself was not included in the ROW application and BLM believes this would have serious safety implications.

19(94)

Comment: I do not think that a proposed road from the Dutchman's Pass area across the ridge west to the petroglyph canyons is necessary. If the road were built, probably 95% of its use would be to get people from one part of Henderson to the other non-stop and would not add anything to the appreciation of the NCA.

Response: The Sloan Canyon NCA Act directed BLM to grant the City of Henderson a right-of-way (ROW) for the North McCullough Road (N-65874), which is envisioned as a scenic roadway constructed to provide access to the NCA, trailheads, and overlook points. The Act requires BLM to recommend a location for the North McCullough Road as part of this planning process. Based on ground surveys, field visits, impact assessments, and extensive dialogue with City of Henderson planners and engineers, as well as cooperating agencies, BLM recommends the proposed Northern Corridor as the location for North McCullough Road. Any future development related to this scenic roadway and associated trail would require additional environmental review.

19(117)

Comment: The discussions for both the North & South Corridor address the road as..."runs along a ridge with existing transmission poles for another 1.5 miles into the Anthem Community adjacent to the Del E. Webb Middle School". (a) Since I live in Anthem Estates (almost right under said transmission line) I am concerned. Further, every existing Henderson school produces a major traffic jam with parents double parked to pick up students at the end of the school day. Additionally, there is a mad influx of people returning home from work past the Middle School and into the Anthem Estates and Anthem Heights. Since this area is already fairly congested and will become even more so when the Del E. Webb Middle School opens. Unless this road is carefully designed, and the traffic patterns/flow rates are meticulously analyzed, I am concerned that this nexus will become a major problem. The minimal amount of back-yard privacy currently enjoyed by homeowners along the Anthem Estates portion of this [North and South Corridor] road, may very well be destroyed unless specific actions to protect the privacy and noise-free peace are implemented. This ROW location should again be reviewed for the impact it will have on any or all the Anthem community and its homeowners.

Response: The City of Henderson holds ROWs for two roads and two trails. The ROW for the existing road is for access to a flood control facility, and two new trail ROWs were granted as part of the Sloan Canyon NCA Act. The Sloan Canyon NCA Act directed BLM to grant the City of Henderson a ROW for the Anthem Trail (N-76312) and the North McCullough Road and Trail (BLM Case File No. N-65874). In September 2002, the City of Henderson submitted an application to construct a trail and scenic roadway through the area now designated as the Sloan Canyon NCA (ROW N-65874). The Sloan Canyon NCA Act required BLM to grant the ROW to the City of Henderson within 180 days of NCA designation and to make a recommendation for the road, unofficially named the North McCullough Road, in the NCA management plan. In May 2003, BLM partially issued the ROW, recognizing that the recommendation for the road location would be developed as part of this RMP process. Once the recommendation is finalized through the ROD, the City of Henderson would Identify a specific alignment and amend ROW application N-65874 to include road design details and visitor facilities, such as parking areas. Additional environmental reviews would be required for this detailed planning.

19(129)

Comment: Concern is with the analysis of the impacts of the proposed "scenic" road through the NCA. Based upon experiences with the "scenic" road through the Red Rock NCA, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the road will be used as a short cut from Boulder City and Henderson to Anthem and I-15. The road through Red Rock is increasingly being used as a short cut from Pahrump and the southern part

of the Las Vegas valley to the northern part of the valley. When it was originally constructed, the "scenic" road through Red Rock had low, posted speeds and low levels of traffic. Today, it is not uncommon to find a mix of traffic on the roads with some people speeding in excess of 60 miles an hour through Red Rock. The Nevada Department of Transportation increased, with no public input, the posted speed along the highway because the road was designed for higher speeds and people were routinely exceeding the lower posted speed limit. We can only conclude that a similar story will be told, years from now, for the proposed "scenic" road through the Sloan Canyon NCA.

Response: The City of Henderson holds ROWs for two roads and two trails. The ROW for the existing road is for access to a flood control facility, and two new trail ROWs were granted as part of the Sloan Canyon NCA Act. The Sloan Canyon NCA Act directed BLM to grant the City of Henderson a right-of-way (ROW) for the North McCullough Road (N-65874), which is envisioned as a scenic roadway constructed to provide access to the NCA, trailheads, and overlook points. In September 2002, the City of Henderson submitted an application to construct a trail and scenic roadway through the area now designated as the Sloan Canyon NCA (ROW N-65874). The Sloan Canyon NCA Act required BLM to grant the ROW to the City of Henderson within 180 days of NCA designation and to make a recommendation for the road, unofficially named the North McCullough Road, in the NCA management plan. In May 2003, BLM partially issued the ROW, recognizing that the recommendation for the road location would be developed as part of this RMP process. Once the recommendation is finalized through the ROD, the City of Henderson would identify a specific alignment and amend ROW application N-65874 to include road design details and visitor facilities, such as parking areas. Additional environmental reviews would be required for this detailed planning. Based on ground surveys, field visits, impact assessments, and extensive dialogue with City of Henderson planners and engineers, as well as cooperating agencies, BLM recommends the proposed Northern Corridor as the location for North McCullough Road. Any future development related to this scenic roadway-associated trail would require additional environmental review.

19(130)

Comment: We question the predicted vehicle counts on the road. How were they estimated? What build out of Anthem and the area east and south of the NCA was contemplated in estimating the traffic levels that would use the "scenic" road as a shortcut? What speed would be used in the design of the road versus the initial, posted speed limit? Who would own and maintain the road? What control would the BLM have, if any, on the road and people using the road?

Response: The Sloan Canyon NCA Act directed BLM to grant the City of Henderson a right-of-way (ROW) for the North McCullough Road and Trail (N-65874) and for the NCA management plan to include a recommendation for the location of the ROW. ROW application N-65874, submitted to the BLM Las Vegas Field Office, contained two potential corridors for the development of the North McCullough Road and Trail, a northern and southern option. The road is intended to be a paved rural road, constructed to provide access to the NCA, trailheads, and overlook points. The road is to be constructed with minimal disturbance to existing grades and vegetation, and the eastbound and westbound lanes would be separated by a natural median. The roadway would be designed for a speed limit of 35 miles per hour (mph) unless a different speed was warranted in certain areas. Related structures could include drainage improvements, bighorn sheep crossings, and parking for trailheads and overlook points. The overall length of the project would be approximately 7 miles. BLM, in conjunction with the City of Henderson, conducted a review of the potential northern and southern corridors, which consisted of field surveys and resource analyses. A potential road alignment was described for each corridor, and natural, cultural, and design parameters were used to compare the alignments or corridors, depending on the detail of available data. Based on the resource analysis contained in the Draft RMP/EIS, input from the public, and discussions with the cooperating agencies, BLM recommends the northern corridor as the location for the issuance of the ROW. The potential impacts of constructing a road along the northern corridor is described differently in this section than the impacts for all other resources in this chapter. Instead of

discussing the impacts to one resource from another (e.g., impacts to wildlife from facilities), this section presents how the potential road and trail would affect other resources (e.g., the impacts of the Northern Corridor on wildlife). Chapter 4 of the PRMP, Table 4.1 presents the potential environmental, design, and construction impacts for the Northern Corridor for the major resource categories. This section does not, however, discuss all of the impacts that could occur when construction and operation of the North McCullough Road begins. Because the Sloan Canyon NCA Act requires only that BLM recommend a location for the North McCullough Road and Trail ROW in this plan, further study and environmental reviews would be needed once the road and trail are further along in the planning stages.

19(306)

Comment: I would like to see management more management in the [access road], can we have a gate that gets locked at 8:00 at night or something? And then reopen it during the day so people can get back there when they want to... I don't want to see those trails blocked off, but I wouldn't mind if we had somewhere at nighttime that we could close off access but then open it back up.

Response: The North McCullough Road, Dutchman Pass Road, Quo Vadis Mine Road, and Rattlesnake Canyon Road would be open to the public for registered vehicles as shown in Figure 2.12, Sloan Canyon Roads—Registered Motorized Vehicles Map. All other roads and routes would be closed to the public for registered vehicle use. All roads and routes not designated for public use could be physically barricaded, signed, or restored to natural conditions.

19(456)

Comment: The Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA) is cooperatively engaged with the City of Henderson and the Las Vegas Valley Water District in evaluating alternatives for a new water transmission pipeline from its River Mountains Water Treatment Facility in East Henderson to somewhere in the area of I-15 corridor. This water transmission pipeline will be required in the future to assure sufficient water supply to meet community needs. One of the pipeline route alternatives being considered by the SNWA is along the right-of-way to be granted to the City of Henderson for the North McCullough Road as stipulated in the Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area Act. On page 2-4 of the Draft RMP/EIS, this right-of-way is proposed to be located in the Northern Corridor. The SNWA asks that RMP/EIS be revised to clearly allow coincident construction of a water transmission pipeline with construction of the proposed North McCullough Road, should that pipeline route alternative be determined by the SNWA to best serve the interests of the community. The justifications for approving coincident construction of the pipeline with the road are as follows: 1. The increased environmental impacts of constructing a pipeline coincident with the road are either non-existent or insignificant. The area of land disturbance for the pipeline construction can be contained within the same area of disturbance necessary for construction of the road. 2. The water pipeline can provide a benefit to the Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area by providing water service for visitor facilities such as restrooms at trailhead parking areas and interpretive kiosks, for administrative or management facilities, or for wildlife watering stations that might be planned proximate to the pipeline routing. On page 2-9 of the Draft RMP/EIS, under the section on Resource Goals and Objectives, one of the specific Facilities Objectives is to "Provide appropriate facilities and/or infrastructure to support management of the NCA." A water pipeline serving NCA facilities would be compliant with the objective also stated on page 2-9 under Lands and Realty to "Allow only development and establishment of new interests within the NCA that are consistent with the intent of the Sloan Canyon NCA Act." Furthermore, as stated on page 2-76, such a pipeline would be compliant with the evaluation criteria of providing a "direct benefit to the NCA, such as utilities to serve NCA facilities." 3. Construction of a water transmission pipeline coincident with the proposed North McCullough Road may be a joint use of community space and resources that overall would result in reduced socioeconomic and cumulative impacts. We believe the justifications presented above are sufficient for approval of a water transmission pipeline along the proposed North McCullough Road through the Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area. Although SNWA is not yet far enough

along in its evaluation of alternative pipeline routes to confirm its preference for the North McCullough Road, we would like to have this option preserved and included in the RMP/EI's should the evaluation demonstrate the superior benefit of such an alignment. In the event that construction of the pipeline coincident with North McCullough Road is not allowed, SNWA might ask for consideration of another alignment through the Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area, either as a surface-cut trench installation along an existing linear disturbance or as an underground tunnel installation with little or no surface disturbance.

Response: The City of Henderson submitted an application to BLM in September 2002, to construct a trail and scenic roadway to provide rural roadway access to the NCA, trailheads, and parking pullouts/overlook points. In November 2002, the Sloan Canyon NCA Act directed BLM to grant the City of Henderson a ROW for the Anthem Trail (N-76312) and the North McCullough Road and Trail (N-65874). The City of Henderson application for the North McCullough Road and Trail did not include a request provision for water transmission pipeline. Under the proposed plan, all new applications for rights-of-way and the application would not be amended to include a pipeline. However, the Southern Nevada Water Authority may submit an application for a new ROW to BLM to construct a water transmission pipeline. The application would be considered on a case-by-case basis and authorized if the action furthers the purpose of the NCA, as described in Section 602 of the Sloan Canyon NCA Act.

19(512)

Comment: In the first paragraph of Section 4.16.4 (Cumulative Impacts by Resource Category, page 4-133), the document states that the North McCullough Road ROW is considered a resource and/or use that would be expected to have negligible cumulative impacts. However, the North McCullough Road ROW is identified as an action that can result in cumulative impacts, rather than a resource that may be impacted.

Response: The proposed plan was modified by deleting "North McCullough Road ROW" as a resource that may experience cumulative impacts.

19(513)

Comment: Earlier in the document in Section 4.2 (Impacts from North McCullough Road Right-of-Way, page 4-4), the following statement appears: "Table 4.1 compares potential environmental, design, and construction impacts for the Northern and Southern Corridors for resources for which differences can be discerned. This section does not, however, discuss all of the resource impacts that could occur from the construction and operation of one of these alternatives as the Sloan Canyon NCA Act requires BLM to recommend a location for the North McCullough Road and Trail ROW." This statement is somewhat vague, and it is unclear what the intent of the document is. Is it stating that no further evaluation of potential impacts is necessary because it is a given that the North McCullough Road and trails will be constructed based on the requirement in the Sloan Canyon NCA Act? Or is it simply stating that it is not possible at this time to further evaluate the potential impact from the ROW since the actual alignment has not been identified as of this time? Perhaps a better wording of the section would be (changes are [in caps]) "Table 4.1 compares potential environmental, design, and construction impacts for the Northern and Southern Corridors for resources for which differences can be discerned. This section does not, however, discuss all of the resource impacts that could occur WHEN the construction and operation of one of these alternatives BEGINS. SINCE the Sloan Canyon NCA Act ONLY requires BLM to recommend a location for the North McCullough Road and Trail ROW IN THIS PLAN, FURTHER STUDY WILL BE NEEDED ONCE THE ROAD AND TRAIL ARE FURTHER ALONG IN THE PLANNING STAGES." Our intent is to affirm that the North McCullough Road and Trail will be constructed and to clarify whether further environmental study will be required when they are. Please let me know if you have any questions or comments.

Response: The proposed plan was modified as suggested.

19(535)

Comment: In view of the conditional Right-of-Way issued, the Department stands opposed to any road development across the North McCullough Mountains. Such new intrusions will seriously degrade, if not compromise, wildlife use of this area. This said the Department encourages the Bureau's adopting the Southern Corridor. The Southern Corridor coincides with the current power line road and would centralize area impacts. In short, the Southern Corridor offers lesser impacts than the Northern Corridor. Table 4.1. The Resources Impacts of the Northern and Southern corridors seem misrepresented. Under Visual Resources, the visual interference of the power lines along the Southern alignment is brought forth, but is omitted from the Northern alignment. If anything, views of the NCA are interfered with more looking south from the Northern Corridor. At the summit and along the east side of the Northern Corridor, the same power line and other will impair the visual landscape. Views toward the core of the NCA would be significantly better from the Southern Corridor. Should the Northern Corridor be adopted, there should be no roads allowed to connect with the power line road along the crest of the mountain. With any road development, measures for impact minimization and mitigation to wildlife and wildlife habitats are in order. Incorporating structures and other considerations to accommodate wildlife movement in the area will be critical. We also have concerns that there will be significant difficulties in maintaining either a 35 mph or 45 mph speed limits. This is plainly demonstrated on the Red Rock Loop Road and other "scenic" roadways in Clark County.

Response: The proposed plan contains BLM's preference for the northern corridor for the North McCullough Road ROW. This preference is based on public comments, discussions with cooperating agencies, and analysis by the planning team. Since the Sloan Canyon NCA Act only requires BLM to recommend a location for the North McCullough Road and Trail ROW in this plan, further study and environmental reviews would be needed once the road and trail are further along in the planning stages.